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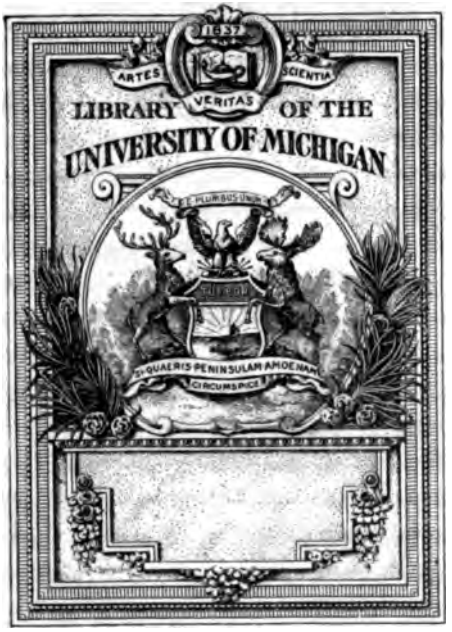
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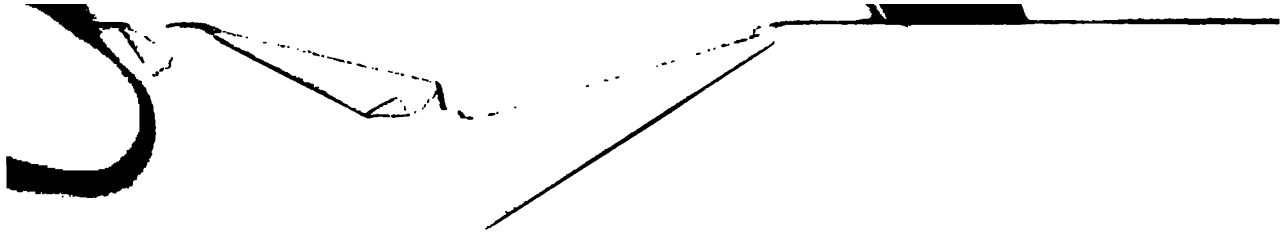

MEMOIRS AND LETTERS

OF

CARDINAL DE BERNIS

VOLUME I.

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MEMOIRS AND LETTERS

OF

François Joachim de Pierre

CARDINAL DE BERNIS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

C.-A. SAINTE-BEUVE

Translated by

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY.

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INTRODUCTION.

By C.-A. SAINTE-BEUVE.

In the last century when young Frenchmen went to Rome, where Cardinal de Bernis resided as ambassador of France from 1769, and where he died in 1794, one of their chief desires was to be presented to him; and the first thing they usually found to say was to thank him for the pleasure his pretty verses had afforded them; on which they were much surprised that the prelate did not answer their compliments as they expected, and that he kept all his amiability and charm for other topics of conversation. I shall not imitate those young Frenchmen of 1780, and shall carefully avoid the mistake into which they fell. There are very distinct periods to be observed when we speak of Bernis; he was not cardinal until he was forty-three years old, and he did not really take Orders until he was forty. Up to that time he was an abbé as many men were in those days, having the title and a few benefices; but he was not bound to the profession; he was not a priest in any degree; and in 1755, at the age of forty, we shall see him hesitate much before taking the step of which he felt the danger, and from which his delicacy as an honest man had hitherto deterred him. "I have bound myself to my profession," he writes to Pâris-Duverney (April 19, 1755), "and I have taken the step after so much reflection that I hope I shall never repent it."

As for his gay little verses, they belong to his youth; he had ceased to make them before he was thirty-five years old.

"I have totally abandoned poetry for the last eleven years," he writes to Voltaire in 1761. "I knew that my little talent injured me in my profession and at Court; I ceased to practise it without regret, because I did not think much of it, and I have never liked whatever was mediocre. I write no more verses and I read few, unless they are, like yours, full of soul, strength, and harmony; I prefer history." It is necessary, therefore, in speaking of Bernis to mark his epochs distinctly, if we desire to be just towards one of the most graceful and most polished minds of the last century, towards a man of real capacity more extensive than people think, a man who knew how to redeem his literary weaknesses and his political pliancy by a decent and useful middle-age and by an honourable end. Documents recently issuing from the archives of the Vatican cast light upon the second half of his career, while he was ambassador of France in Rome. To these I shall presently refer; but first I desire to speak of the more frivolous Abbé de Bernis, from whom we shall see the serious man insensibly emerging.

He was born at Saint-Marcel d'Ardèche in Vivarais, May 22, 1715, of an ancient race of high nobility. As a younger son he was destined for the Church. He came to Paris for his first studies at the Jesuit college (Louis-le-Grand), and he did his philosophy and his theology at the seminary of Saint-Sulpice and the Sorbonne. We find him successively canon and Comte de Brioude, canon and Comte de Lyon, that is to say, a member of chapters for which he was required to give proofs of very ancient nobility; these positions were for him merely honorary. While awaiting benefices which did not come (having only a very insignificant one at Boulogne-sur-mer) the Abbé-Comte de Bernis entered society, for which he was made, especially that portion of it which is called the great world, but in it he lived as

poor as the poorest of new-comers. Diderot speaks somewhere of dinners he more than once ate with him at six sous a head. For years Bernis supported gaily and with indifference this cramped condition, this contrast between his tastes and his situation, between all that he saw and did not have. But his soul "was brave and gentle," and youth, that ready and easy consoler, stood him in place of all; no man was ever made to enjoy more than he; all contemporaries tell us of the advantages of his person and the charms of his face. "I always remember your grace, your fine countenance, and your mind," wrote Voltaire many years later. Duclos, his friend, one of those who have spoken best of him, and whose habitual harshness softens to depict him, says: "From birth an amiable face, a *candid countenance*, much intelligence, charm, a sound judgment, and a trusty character made all societies seek him; he lived pleasantly with them all." Marmontel also, less agreeable in this than Duclos, and with less variety of tone, tells us that "the Abbé de Bernis, escaping from the seminary of Saint-Sulpice, where he succeeded ill, was a gallant poet, very plump, very rosy, very dainty, who, together with Gentil-Bernard, amused the joyous suppers of Paris with his pretty verses." That rotund and ample figure, that handsome rounded face and triple chin which strike us in the portraits of Bernis as an old man, came to him rather early in life; but at first something childlike and delicate mingled with them, and always, even to the last, his profile kept its distinction and elegance; the forehead and eyes were very fine.

He began by making verses to his "Dieux Pénates" (1736), as Gresset did upon his "Chartreuse." These verses of Bernis, done at twenty-one years of age, have all Gresset's defects; they have also his facility and his flow of language. Already we see the Cupids and Zephyrs which pervade

Bernis, and made d'Alembert say that "if you cut their wings you cut their vitals."

"Mais qu'une Sagesse stérile
N'occupe jamais mes loisirs ;
Que toujours ma muse fertile
Imite, en variant son style,
Le vol inconstant des Zéphyrs."

Bernis in his best moments has a certain harmonious languor, but the tender note is soon lost, drowned in a dainty but insipid warbling. We can scarcely find any of his lines to quote in the midst of this abundant and monotonous superfluity; for if he has an occasional turn to revery and sentiment in his poems, he is wholly wanting in ideas and invention. In a few of his "Epistles" there are some rather pretty passages on Ambition, or on Laziness, which picture him.

"Qui sait, au printemps de son âge,
Souffrir les maux avec courage
A bien des droits sur les plaisirs.
. . . . . .
Pourquoi chercher si loin la gloire ?
Le plaisir est si près de nous !"

The tone is always and everywhere the same. In this very "Epistle on Laziness," the only one which La Harpe singled out, we see Bernis graceful, natural, but without force, without any loftiness of purpose, without ideal. In his opening poem, "To my Penates," he had spoken rather severely of Voltaire, apostrophizing him as a brilliant mind then in its decadence; he soon abandoned this youthful judgment; they grew attached, and Voltaire, while applauding and caressing him, gave him one of those nicknames he excelled in finding, — nicknames which comprise a whole judgment. Bernis had made a string of descriptive verses called "The Four Parts of a Day," following it with another string (I dare not say of

poems) called "The Four Seasons." These verses obtained in society an immense success, which, later, evaporated completely. Bernis had put into them even more than his wont of flowers, garlands, posies; whereupon Voltaire called him, speaking to Bernis himself, "la belle Babet," and speaking to others, "the big Babet," — Babet being a flower-girl then in vogue, a vender of what is called "The Four Seasons."

Let us not be unjust nor too rigorous to Bernis; he judged himself as a man of taste, a man of sense, and as if there were nothing of the poet in him. Voltaire, who gave him the pretty and malicious nickname, was the first, years after, to flatter him about his verses and to play the rôle of tempter. In 1763, Bernis, after his ministry, being in exile and in political disgrace, some enemy hoping to injure him, or some greedy publisher, reprinted his "Four Seasons" with the title "By M. le C. de B." "I do not know," writes Voltaire, liking to harp upon the topic, "who wrote those 'Four Seasons;' the titlepage says, 'By M. le C. de B.' Apparently that is Cardinal de Bembo; they say that cardinal is the most agreeable man in the world; he has loved literature all his life; it increases his pleasures, also people's respect for him, and it softens his griefs — if he has any." At other times he returns to his recollections of Babet, "filling her beautiful basket with that profusion of flowers;" he jokes, teases, and turns criticism into praise. Bernis is grateful for the intention, but does not allow himself to be taken in by it.

"As for Babet's 'Seasons'" he replies, "I hear they are dreadfully mangled; I have not seen them these twenty years. After my death, some charitable soul will purify those amusements of my youth, which have been cruelly ill-used, and mixed up with all sorts of platitudes. As for me, I laugh at the trouble people give themselves uselessly

to set traps for me. They think to ruin me by proving that I wrote verses till I was thirty-two [elsewhere he says thirty-five]; they do me only honour; I wish with all my heart I had the talent as I still have the taste for poesy; but I like better to read yours than I did to make mine. If you want me to tell you my secret wholly, it is that I renounced making verses when I saw that I could not be superior in an art which excludes mediocrity."

It would be ungracious, after such a judgment, so full of sense and candour, to give ourselves the easy pleasure of laughing at Bernis for his poetry.

In those days, and in spite of compliments, all sorts of criticism were made to him. "I am asked," he writes in 1741, "how it is possible that a man born to live in the great world should amuse himself in writing, and in becoming an author." To these critics, great seigneurs and men of rank, he answers that "if it is not shameful to know how to think it certainly is not so to know how to write; and it is not the making of books that dishonours a man, but the melancholy habit of making bad ones." With regard especially to writing poetry, Bernis thus reflects: "It is difficult to be young and live in Paris without having a desire to make verses," and he thinks, as to such as are made with more or less talent, that it does not follow that such talent brings with it all the extravagances that render certain versifiers ridiculous. "Happy they," he cries with feeling and truth, "happy they who have received a talent which follows them everywhere, which, in silence and solitude, brings before their eyes all that absence had made them lose; which lends a body and colours to all that breathes, which gives to the world inhabitants whom the vulgar mind ignores."

This pronounced literary taste, which was, as it were, the

advertisement of a careless and worldly life, did Bernis much harm in his career. Cardinal de Fleury, a friend of his family, sent for him and told him that if he continued in that course he must expect nothing so long as he, Cardinal de Fleury lived. On which Bernis bowed humbly and made his well-known speech: "Monseigneur, I will wait." In quoting it, some persons have supposed that it was said in after years to Boyer, Bishop of Mirepoix, minister of benefices; this is an error, which takes from the saying its point and its vengeance. It can only have its true value when addressed by a very young man to a very old prime-minister who forgot his age at the moment.

Bernis, man of society, of agreeable conversation, and of safe and brilliant intercourse, to which his ambition seemed limited, was early known to Mme. de Pompadour; he was in favour with her as well as with the king, but he had never as yet obtained anything towards making his fortune. It was the French Academy that opened his way to it. He was elected a member at the close of 1744, that is to say, when he was twenty-nine years of age. He succeeded the Abbé Gédoyn, and was received on the same day as the Abbé Girard, the grammarian. In his speech of thanks he refers modestly to his youth, which, "far from doing him an injury, had spoken in his favour." He says a few words on the usefulness of relations between men of the world and men of letters; on the advantages the language had gained from such relations since the days of the La Rochefoucaulds, the Saint-Évremonds, and the Bussys; adding that it was on the footing of their successor that he himself was now entering the Company. Crébillon, the tragic writer, who received him, merely gave him this vague eulogy: "Your genius has so far seemed to turn chiefly to poesy." In the years that followed his reception, Bernis figures more than

once at the head of the Academy on the solemn occasions when it was required to appear at Versailles. The Society chose him as a face and subject agreeable to the king.

His friends say that at this period he aspired only to obtaining, by means of a few petty benefices, the modest sum of six thousand francs a year, which he thought would make him happy for life. But Boyer, Bishop of Mirepoix, who was minister of benefices after Cardinal de Fleury's death, resisted the entreaties of all Bernis' friends, even the most powerful: he made a condition (which to us, in these days, seems quite reasonable) that Bernis should bind himself seriously to his profession, should cease to be an abbé in name only, and become a priest. Bernis, from conscience and a sense of his want of strength, recoiled and delayed; his habits and morals were of his age and of his time; his heart and mind had nothing irreligious in them; but the prospect of a bishopric, which he was allowed to look for at the cost of external sacrifices was more calculated to frighten than to tempt him.

"No, you know too well my honour:
Culpable, perhaps, through frailty,
But an enemy to imposture.
I will not add impiety
To the weaknesses of nature."

That is what he said to his friend the Duc de Nivernais, in an "Epistle on Ambition."

More than that: Bernis, before this period, and as far back as 1737, had undertaken, by advice of Cardinal de Polignac (with whom he had more than one tie of nature, frailty, and genius), a serious poem, finished in later years and sumptuously printed after his death (Parma, 1795), entitled "Religion Avenged." In this poem, which in truth is not a poem at all, and is destitute of invention like all Bernis'

work, are some very good philosophical verses, a clear exposition and a judicious and rather vigorous refutation of the systems of Lucretius, Pyrrho, and Spinoza. I have all my life remembered the following lines, which are not the only ones that might be quoted:—

> "God, universal Father, watches o'er every species;
> The universe is subject to the laws of his wisdom;
> From man it descends to the vilest gnat;
> It needed God himself to create a worm."

But in spite of these attempts at sincere conversion and this confession of principles, Bernis had the honesty not to take advantage of them, but to confess his weakness, even to Boyer; consequently, his fortunes did not advance. It was then that Louis XV., tired of the struggle, gave him a pension of fifteen hundred francs a year and a lodging under the eaves of the Tuileries; up to this time, Bernis had lived in the house of one of his relatives, the Baron de Montmorency. One day when Bernis was coming from Mme. de Pompadour's apartment carrying under his arm a roll of chintz which she had given him to furnish his new apartment, he met the king on the staircase; his Majesty insisted on knowing what he was carrying; he was forced to show the chintz and explain its purpose. "Very well," said Louis XV., putting a roll of louis into his hand, "she has given you the drapery, here 's for the nails."

Nevertheless, impatience came to Bernis at last, and, according to the witty remark of Duclos, seeing that he had so much trouble in making a small fortune, he resolved on attempting to make a large one: it proved much easier to do. He began by being sent as ambassador to Venice in 1752. Many things, more or less romantic, were written and printed in which Bernis' name was mixed up at the date of this embassy; we will confine ourselves to those

which are open to honourable men. We have his correspondence with Pâris-Duverney during those years; it is wholly to his honour, and it begins to make him known to us on his political and serious side. Pâris-Duverney, a superior man with administrative capacity of the first order and a singular talent for matters of war, was already in semi-retirement; he was then almost exclusively employed in realizing his last patriotic thought, — that of the establishment of the École Militaire. We know that he was one of the great protectors of Beaumarchais in his opening career; we now find him tenderly allied with Bernis, in whom he recognizes talent and a future. In their correspondence the latter enters into the details of his life as an ambassador: "My house is decent, well-furnished, and nothing shows the younger son of Gascony. I try at the same time to keep it orderly." Like all Frenchmen absent from Paris he feels a void; he complains of his languishing life and regrets society: "However, if one is ever happy having nothing to do and living with people who have nothing to do, I am. Nothing is lacking to my peace and, I dare to say it, to the consideration that is shown to me; but I need a little more food for my mind." Above all, he regrets his Saturdays, the day of the week which he was wont to spend in Paris with Duverney. "If my Saturdays were only preserved to me," he writes, "I should applaud myself for having taken a course which will daily become more and more advantageous for me, but will never be of any use to the king so long as I stay in a place where there is nothing to do."

This inaction, which he felt from the first, was to grow more and more into a burden upon him; and it was thus that ennui ended, little by little, by inoculating him with ambition. Meanwhile, he talks with his friend, speaks of

that which interests the latter most, his dear foundation, that École Militaire about which Duverney encountered such obstacles at its outset. The worthy founder replies with beautiful and noble words on this subject, which reveal, even under the reign of Louis XV., the heart of a citizen. I wish to quote a few of them; be it only to bring morality into my topic, the beginnings of which have been a little enervating: —

"What you tell me, monsieur," writes Duverney to Bernis, "of the opinion of foreigners on this establishment is little fitted to moderate my impatience; I still have much eagerness in these matters, which contribute to the glory of our master and the good of the nation. . . . Objections have never repulsed me. It is usual for great enterprises to be thwarted. Experience has also taught me that the value of great things is never better known than to those who have not seen them born. We praise, we admire to-day what was blamed formerly. Under M. de Louvois the friends of M. Colbert said that the Hôtel Royal des Invalides was only a humiliating hospital for soldiers; to-day, lieutenant-colonels do not blush to retire there. Under Mme. de Maintenon it was asserted that the proofs of poverty required for admission to Saint Cyr would alienate the nobles; to-day, nobles in easy circumstances are not ashamed to say that they are poor in order to gain admission for their daughters, who, beneath that brown woollen gown which formerly seemed so repulsive, are showing more vanity and pride than is desirable. Time removes objects from passions that obscure them; and, when they are good in themselves, we come at last to seeing only that good."

Bernis is worthy of this generous intercourse to which friendship invites him; he encourages his friend, he comforts him with affectionate warmth: "I would fain gather

all good hearts to give them to you." He desires to be in a position to defend him against the injustices and the dislikes that begin to overwhelm him: "Would to God that I were within reach of bearing testimony to the truth! with what pleasure should I render an account of the sorrows of the friend and citizen of which I have been the witness and the repository!" Here Bernis rises to ideas which are by no means foreign to him, although we are not accustomed to associate them with his name; he speaks in accents that come from his soul:—

"If men were not ungrateful," he says; "I would forgive the folly, inconsistency, ill-temper, and all the other imperfections that certainly degrade humanity; but it is hard not to gather the fruits of our benefactions! it is the sower sowing his seed on stony ground. However, in spite of that ingratitude, there are superior souls who desire to make the happiness of men without expecting other reward than that of being satisfied with themselves."

In another place he says:—

"If you were reasonable only you would not be so great a citizen; *zeal must face obstacles which reason tells us to avoid.* As for me, I think that what brings ruin on States is the so-called wisdom attributed to those who dare not run the risks that always attend the effort to procure the greatest possible good. We are too anxious to make our fortune in these days, and too fearful of losing it when made: this is the universal evil which is now afflicting Europe; for, thank God, whatever may be said, we are not the only ones who deserve blame. You see, monsieur, that, in spite of myself, moral ideas are getting possession of me; that is the malady of those who are nearly always in solitude."

These letters of Bernis and Duverney, which have nothing very interesting in their topics, and which were printed in

1790 with the most ridiculous and impertinent notes that can be imagined, are curious when read, as I have read them, from the point of view of biography and a knowledge of the two characters. While we feel in Duverney a grandeur of soul accompanied by kindness and even *bonhomie*, the temperate, noble, human, and fairly elevated character of Bernis comes forth naturally; his mind gives glimpses of shades and perceptions of delicacy. Thus, speaking of one of their mutual friends who, under critical circumstances, had written to Duverney a letter couched in a semblance of philosophy and of a nature to cause delusion, he says: "The philosophical spirit that is now spreading over the surface of the world makes it difficult to distinguish at first sight fools from wise men, or honest men from rascals. Every one seems rich because every one has silver or false coin; but a few days suffice to distinguish the one from the other." This shrewd remark of Bernis on the varnish of the philosophical spirit which was everywhere at that time, applies to-day to many another varnish, equally wide-spreading, — varnish of talent, varnish of mind, varnish of judgment. Each man takes his varnish every morning on reading his newspaper; the journalist has taken his the night before; the dye of the one colours the other; in twelve hours every one repeats himself. Where is the real spirit, the new and original judgment? And how much time and how many occasions are required to test and distinguish them. A few days do not suffice, as Bernis may then have thought.

Bernis never became a great directing minister. Could he have been one? I do not know. Fate did not give him time to repair his mistakes or correct his hazardous undertakings; but Bernis was always an excellent ambassador; he had insinuation, conciliation, courtesy; he represented

his position with taste and magnificence; he will always be the model of a French ambassador in Rome, such as he was for twenty years. It was in Venice that he served his apprenticeship, at any rate for externals, public affairs being almost nothing there. "As this embassy," he remarks, "is more for show than for necessity, it is sometimes thought that any one is fitted for it; in which they are hugely mistaken;" and he defines admirably the qualities that are essential in the representative of the king if he desires to be respected in a post of this kind. Let him speak for himself, for we cannot say the thing as well as he: —

"When we have business to negotiate with a foreign Court, it is the manner in which it is conducted that fixes the attention and decides the esteem in which we are held. But when there is nothing to negotiate or disentangle with a Court, we are judged by our personality; thus it requires great attention to avoid the censure of a crowd of inquisitive and penetrating observers, who are seeking to unravel your character and your principles, while you yourself are wholly unable to divert their attention. If the king desires to make his crown and his nation respected in Venice, he must always send here a man of common-sense; that will suffice, provided he is a man with a lofty soul and decent manners for it is impossible to awe a very libertine nation, I might even say a debauched one, except by the opposite morals."

Such words are noteworthy on Bernis' lips. Did he justify them in all respects? At any rate he could not better show the value which he placed on esteem, and from that period he knew how to obtain it, no matter what the secret chronicles may say.

Nevertheless the two years and a half that Bernis spent in Venice seemed to him extremely long. He felt that his Versailles friends would not leave him there eternally; he had

the vague but certain hope of a future return: "My greatest pain is that of aspiring to be useful, to open modestly a way to it, yet to be ever driven back into inaction and uselessness; so much for my moral condition." Physically his health suffered for want of exercise; his size increased and gout attacked his knees. It was then that ambition came to him; from the moment that he ceased to be a private individual, enjoying as he pleased the charms and pleasures of society, he could only be a busy and useful public man; he sums up this alternative in admirable terms: "To be free and master of one's leisure, or to fill one's time with labours of which the State shall reap the fruits — these are the two positions an honest man should desire; a medium career is nothingness."

Certain ministers at Versailles, who feared his return, set traps for him; they employed all kinds of manœuvres to keep him fixed in this lagune. "I see plainly," he says, "that by their tricks they will find a way to make me stay with my arms folded in this cul-de-sac." Duverney counsels and calms him under these attacks of impatience, which are always tempered in Bernis with philosophy, and never go so far as irritation. "All things here below depend on circumstances," writes Duverney, "and circumstances have such frequent revolutions that the wisest thing to do is to prepare ourselves to take advantage of them the moment they turn our way. It is almost always dangerous to try to force them; nothing is gained but torments, which increase as our hopes retreat; and we pass our lives without a moment of real satisfaction. We should always be ready to act, but force nothing . . ."

Money was a great torment to Bernis; he had nothing but his salary, and the first year of his embassy he spent twenty-three thousand francs beyond it. German princes and princesses and personages of mark were ceaselessly passing through Venice on their way to Italy, and had to be entertained.

In November, 1754, the Duc de Penthièvre arrived at the embassy with his suite and lodged there thirteen days. "I got through with this embarrassment very well," says Bernis gallantly, "after many expenses, incurred in profusion, but without extravagance; and there remains to me the friendship of a *prince honest man*, and the satisfaction of having contented all the ranks of his household." Duverney takes upon himself to further Bernis' interests at Court; the only urgent thing is pecuniary help. If some good abbey should fall vacant it would be a great point to obtain it. As for better political places, it is agreed between the two friends that it would be wiser to press nothing; the agreement is: "In regard to places, one should know how to raise the siege when they defend themselves too long." On this point Bernis has firm tactics, a gentle and insinuating method, namely: "Never to take places by assault, and never to refuse those that surrender of themselves." Finally, the end of his apprenticeship arrives, and Bernis, recalled to Paris, sets out for France at the close of April, 1755.

Duclos, Bernis' friend and confidant, has very well described to us the employment of his life during these years that are now to be so busy. This was the moment when the alliance was closely formed between France and Austria, and the Treaty of Versailles was conceived and discussed secretly. Bernis, though not yet minister, was the principal agent, the confidential plenipotentiary; he debated and settled the articles with the Imperial Ambassador, M. de Staremberg. Persons have done Bernis the honour to attribute to him the first idea of this treaty which upset the policy of Richelieu and changed the system of continental alliances in Europe. They have done more, they have gone so far as to say that in thus taking sides with Austria against Prussia it was the poet, the rhymester within him that sought revenge. Fred-

erick the Great at the end of an "Epistle" to Comte Gotter, in which he describes the infinite details of human industry and labour had said: —

> "I have not described all; for the matter 's immense,
> And I leave to Comte Bernis his barren abundance."

It has been supposed that Bernis knew of this "Epistle" and that those lines were the motive that made him counsel the powers at Versailles to abandon the King of Prussia and ally themselves with the Empress. Turgot, in certain anonymous verses which went the rounds of Paris and vividly exposed the withering disasters with which the Seven Years' War was afflicting France, exclaimed: —

> "Bernis, have you victims enough?
> And a king's contempt for your little rhymes —
> Is it duly avenged?"

But in this explanation, since so constantly repeated, nothing is correct; the grave Turgot imagined a gratuitous cause, and if petty motives did indeed contribute to produce those great calamities, Bernis at least had no cause to blush for so mean and miserable a motive as that of which he is accused. Bernis had no rancour of that kind against the Great Frederick, and his heart of an honest man was far higher placed than that. Algarotti, who had known him when ambassador in Venice, wrote to the King of Prussia (January 11, 1754): "I see quite often the French ambassador, who is well-fitted to represent the most agreeable nation upon earth. He flatters himself, Sire, that the course he has now taken up may lead him to again pay his court to your Majesty. He has many titles by which to admire you, Sire: as minister, as one of the Forty, as a man of wit. I should see him oftener than I do if his cook were not so good." When Madame de Pompadour confided to Bernis for the first time this idea of

the alliance with Austria, so contrary to established policy, he began by objections; Duclos, on Bernis' behalf, says so expressly. Frederick, an equitable adversary, confirms it in his History; he blames Bernis only for lending himself to views the imprudence of which he felt up to a certain point, and which he, later, strove to moderate, but in vain.

"So long as it was a question of establishing his fortune," writes the historian-king, "all ways were the same to him to reach his object; but as soon as he found himself established he sought to maintain himself in office by principles less fickle and more conformable to the permanent interests of the State. His views turned wholly towards peace, to end, on the one hand, a war of which he foresaw only its disadvantages, and on the other, to withdraw his nation from an enforced and adverse alliance, of which France was bearing the burden and from which the house of Austria would alone reap the fruits and the advantages. He addressed himself to England by silent and secret means; he opened negotiations there for peace; but the Marquise de Pompadour being of a contrary opinion, he at once found himself stopped short in his measures. His imprudent actions had raised him, his wise views ruined him; he was dismissed for having talked of peace."

At the very moment when Bernis was actually dismissed Frederick spoke of him to Lord Marshall in the same manner: "People exaggerated Bernis' merits while he was in favour; and now they blame him too much — he deserves neither."

This important point in the history of the eighteenth century will never be completely cleared up until a conscientious historian is allowed to go to work on the State papers and has made continuous extracts from them. Still,

the general meaning of the conclusion may be foreseen and judged in advance. As to the aspect of Bernis himself and the movements of his mind amid this torrent, we may gain some idea from the letters and notes which he continues to address to Duverney. During that busy year (1756–1757), when he puts his hand to great affairs before he enters upon his ministry, he is no longer the infirm and languishing man of Venice, who has gout in his knees, and whose life drags on from one inflammation of the chest to another; he is prodigal of himself in society, spends half his nights at cards and pretends that he likes it, the better to hide his other game; for as yet he is not a minister; the secret negotiation he is conducting is carried on outside of the cabinet, and those who are in office watch him. In the midst of all these cares he was never in better health. His nature, apparently so epicurean and lazy, has found its element. "We are in the throes of a great decision," he writes to Duverney (October 13, 1756); "my health is good in spite of the labour, which increases and will increase day by day."

His only complaint is not to have all to do, not to have the whole burden upon himself: "The final orders have arrived (Fontainebleau, November 5, 1756); I am now employed in the greatest work that ever was done. They will not see that everything depends on the execution, and that it is unbearable to be charged with a plan without having the right to watch over its execution and conduct it." That will be his continual complaint throughout the whole period of his favour; for even after he entered the ministry he was constantly thwarted by those, or to speak more truly, by *her*, who used him only as an instrument: "They made me dance upon a great stage with fetters on my feet and hands. I consider myself very lucky to have

come out of it and saved my reputation." He did not save it as intact as he flattered himself.

Bernis, entering the Council as minister of State in January, 1757,[1] appointed secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in June of the same year, promoted to the dignity of cardinal in October, 1758, was suddenly superseded by Choiseul in November, and almost immediately sent into exile at his abbey of Saint-Médard of Soissons. The first emotion over, he told himself, with the good sense and reflection devoid of bitterness with which he was provided and which formed the basis of his character: "I have no longer my fortune to make; I have only to honestly fulfil the career of my profession and acquire the consideration which ought to accompany a great dignity: for that, retirement is admirably well fitted."

It is under this last form, no longer political nor yet social, and not absolutely ecclesiastical, but agreeably diversified and mingled, — it is in this retirement, soon to be followed and crowned by a great embassy, that we must study him henceforth in his quality as cardinal, finding pleasure in recognizing him more and more as an eminent personage, of gentle mind, rare culture, and infinite social art.

I shall here make a short digression and profit by an unexpected document, the knowledge of which I owe to the kindness of M. le Duc Pasquier, former chancellor of France. This document, which appears to have come originally from Cardinal Loménie de Brienne, consists of a manuscript collection of the private letters of Bernis written by him during his ministry to M. de Choiseul, then our ambassador at Vienna, and subsequently his successor in the ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to the Marquise de Pompadour and

[1] Two weeks before the death of the Marquis d'Argenson. — Tr.

the king, written at the close of his ministry and during the first days of his dismissal. They explain the causes of his retirement and fall, more clearly than our previous knowledge of them. They allow us to judge with precision of his degree of incompetency at the head of public affairs, and also of the excuses that belong to his defence. In what I have now to say, I shall take Bernis less as minister than as witness and reporter of the deplorable situation he contributed to create, and in which he took part without having either the strength or the influence to produce a remedy. The sight, which I shall merely glance at after Bernis without enlarging upon it, is distressing; but it holds within it certain stern lessons which history has already drawn; it makes us penetrate into the causes of the ruin of the old monarchy; it makes us feel to what a point the noblest nations (our own in particular) depend, for the spirit that animates them and for their inward vigour, on the governments that rule them and on the men who are at their head.

The condition of public opinion in France at the beginning of the Seven Years' War, so lightly undertaken, was not what it became a year later; the new alliance with Austria, conceived in defiance of ancient maxims, filled all minds and flattered all hopes. The Empress Maria Theresa, in her brave and passionate struggle against the aggrandizement of Prussia, had employed a special blandishment in her effort to win France; she had not disdained to make herself the "friend" of Madame de Pompadour, and sides were taken with Austria at Versailles precisely as we declare for private friends against all others in the social cabal of a clique. Bernis, just returned from Venice, and who was, as it were, in the hollow of Madame de Pompadour's hand, was charged with drawing up the plan and negotiating the treaty of alliance. In spite of his first objections as a man of sense,

he did not long resist the general impulse which carried away every one about him; he was dazzled, and believed he was contributing to the greatest political operation attempted since the days of Richelieu.

At first, all things appeared to go well; the new alliance so extolled by the Court was very well taken by the public until the news came of the first disasters. We had begun by successes; the taking of Port-Mahon, the victory of Hastenbeck, the first advantages of the Duc de Richelieu seemed to promise an easy triumph to this novelty in diplomatic combination. Bernis, minister of Foreign Affairs since June, 1757, kept all his hopes alive until the moment when the Duc de Richelieu concluded with the Duke of Cumberland the convention of Kloster-Zeven (September 8, 1757), which allowed the enemy's army to exist, and was never to be ratified. It is here that Bernis' correspondence with Choiseul (then Comte de Stainville) gives to us the connected train of his thoughts and his anxieties. "M. de Richelieu, my dear count," he writes (September 20, 1757), "has rather forced the affair of the convention. No act was ever less pondered, or concluded with less formalities. The Duke of Mecklenburg and the Swedes will not be pleased, and I fear much that annoyances may arise which will counterbalance the advantages. It is true that this event is glorious in appearance, and gives M. de Richelieu the facility to put himself forward; but beware the consequences!" From this moment the chances of war turn and become unfavourable. Two letters from Bernis, written on the news of the defeat at Rosbach, are such that we cannot extract them; it is not the defeat, but certain details of the defeat which should be buried. Will it be believed that on learning of this disaster nothing was thought of at Versailles but the "poor general," who allowed himself to be beaten?

"They saw nothing at Court in the lost battle but M. de Soubise, nothing of the State. Our friend [*notre amie;* Madame de Pompadour is always mentioned thus between Bernis and Choiseul], our friend gave him the strongest proofs of friendship, and the king also." What is worse than this condolence is that they think only of procuring him a revenge, and Bernis himself, since he must, lends himself to it. "The king loves M. de Soubise," he writes the following spring to Duverney; "he wants to give him the opportunity to revenge himself for Rosbach; there is the truth. One must not oppose one's master, but serve him as he wishes, especially when circumstances render all other courses impossible, or dangerous."

That which appears most distinctly in Bernis from end to end of these letters to Choiseul is the character of an honest man below the situation; one who is the designated and responsible author of an alliance now shown to be fatal, who feels himself involved, and has not the power to either hold firm or to repair the evil. "One does not die of grief," he writes to Choiseul (December 13, 1757), "inasmuch as I am not dead after September 8" (period of the heedless convention of Kloster-Zeven). "The blunders since then have been heaped up in a manner that cannot be explained except by bad intentions. I have spoken with the utmost force to *God* and his *saints*. I excite a little rise in the pulse; then lethargy returns; great sad eyes are opened, and all is said." He finds that France has neither king, nor generals, nor ministers; and that expression seems to him so true and just that he consents to be included himself in the category of those who do not exist. "It seems to me that I am minister of Foreign Affairs in Limbo. Try, my dear count, if you cannot excite better than I have done the principle of life which is dying within us. As for me, I have struck all

my great blows, and I am about, like the others, to have a paralysis of feeling, but without ceasing to do my duty as a citizen and an honest man."

At this date there was no direction in France, neither in the armies nor in the cabinet. The affairs of the ministry of war were still, through the subalterns, under the influences of "Les Ormes" [The Elms], that is to say, under that of Comte d'Argenson now in exile on his estate at Les Ormes, having quitted the ministry in the early months of 1757.[1] Insubordination, and want of discipline are everywhere; no one is feared or obeyed; the rivalry and disunion of the Duc de Richelieu and the Prince de Soubise have led to the disasters of the close of the campaign; demands are made on the Maréchal de Belleisle and Duverney for memoranda and plans for the coming campaign which will not be followed. In the midst of these reverses which affect so profoundly the military honour and the future of the monarchy, the apathy of Louis XV. is total. "There is no such example of playing so great a game with the same indifference as a game of cards." The sole honour to Bernis, charged with the political side, but excluded, naturally, from military questions, and having only a trifle more favour than others, but no more authority or influence in decisive moments, is that of comprehending the evil and suffering from it. "Sensitive, and, if I may dare to say so, sensible as I am, I am dying on the rack, and my martyrdom is useless to the State." He cries out for a government at any cost, with nerve, consistency, and foresight: "Please God to send us a *will* of some sort, or some one who would have it for us! I would be his *valet de chambre* if need be, and with all my heart."

[1] He was succeeded in it by his nephew the Marquis de Paulmy, son of his late brother, the Marquis d'Argenson. — Tr.

Bernis had nothing in him which awed the king or Madame de Pompadour. The latter had known him in poverty; she had drawn him out of it; she enjoyed him for the gentleness of his intercourse and the charm of his society; but she considered him at all times as her creation. The minister was to her still the little abbé, smiling and flowery, who came to her *lever* on Sunday mornings and whom she tapped familiarly on the cheek with a "Good-day, abbé." It is related that on one occasion, during the altercations at the close of their intercourse, she reproached him sharply with having lifted him out of the dust; to which he answered with dignity, alluding to his rank: "Madame, a Comte de Lyon is never lifted out of the dust." However that may be, it is certain that Bernis never had the slightest ascendency over the king or over Madame de Pompadour. It was M. de Choiseul who, without being above him in birth, but adding to his birth at all times the habits and state of a great seigneur, was able to win that necessary influence, and justify it definitively by his capacity.

In any Study of the eighteenth century Madame de Pompadour is inevitable. We must not fear to call things and epochs by their name; and the name under which the eighteenth century may most justly in many respects be designated, for the taste, the style universally reigning in the arts of design, in the fashions and usages of life, in poesy even,— is it not that coquettish and decorative name which seems to be made expressly for the beautiful marquise and to rhyme so well with *amour?* All the arts of that period bear her seal; the great painter Watteau, who came before her time and who created a magic pastoral world, seems to have decorated and embellished it expressly that she might take possession of it to bloom and reign there. The successors of Watteau delighted unanimously in recognizing the sceptre

of their natural protectress. In poesy, it is not Bernis alone who is wholly Pompadour, it is Voltaire in three-fourths of his lesser verses, it is the whole light poetry of the day; even in prose we have Marmontel in his "Contes Moraux," and Montesquieu himself in his "Temple de Gnide." The "style Pompadour" unquestionably existed before the advent of the beautiful marquise, but she sums it up in herself, she crowns it and personifies it.

Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson, born in Paris, December 29, 1721, issued from that rich bourgeoisie and that world of finance which pushed itself forward in the last half of Louis XV.'s reign, and in which it was not rare to find a witty and sumptuous epicureanism; to this she added elegance. Every one agrees in saying that in her youth she had all the talents and all the graces. Her education had been most careful in the arts that charm; everything had been taught to her, except morality. "I found there," writes President Hénault to Mme. du Deffand, referring to some social occasion, "one of the prettiest women I have ever seen,— Mme. d'Étioles. She knows music perfectly, she sings with all the taste and gaiety possible, knows hundreds of songs, plays comedy at Étioles on a stage as fine as that of the Opera, with scenery and changes of it."

There she is, such as she was before her meeting with Louis XV., — daughter of a gay mother who was kept by a farmer-general, married as if provisionally to a nephew of the latter. It appears that very early the whole family, seeing how seductive and enchanting she was, destined her for higher things, and were only awaiting the occasion and the moment. "She is a morsel for a king," they said on all sides around her; and the young woman ended by believing this destiny as mistress of the king to be the star of her life.

Louis XV. was then in the first glow of his tardy emanci-

La Tour

Mme de Pompadour

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pation, and the nation, not knowing for a long time where to turn, had taken to loving him distractedly. Mme. d'Étioles did the same. When the king went to hunt in the forest of Sénart, not far from Étioles, she appeared before him as if by chance in a pretty carriage. The king noticed her and gallantly sent her some game; then, in the evening, a *valet de chambre*, a relative of the family, insinuated to the master all desired details and offered his services for the result. All this, as a beginning, is not fine, but it is history.

Louis XV., endowed with so fine a face and so many apparent graces, showed himself from his youth up the weakest and most timid of kings. Sickly in his childhood, the young king, whose life seemed to hang on a thread, had been raised with excessive caution; they spared him all effort, more even than is customary with princes. Cardinal de Fleury directed his education in this effeminate manner; the old man of nearly eighty, from long habit and wiliness, kept his royal pupil in leading-strings; turning him aside from all that resembled ideas or enterprise and carefully uprooting the slightest impulse or desire, he accustomed him to none but easy things. Nature, moreover, had done nothing to help the royal youth to rise above this senile and effeminate education. He had no spark of anything in him but that which soon declared itself for things of the senses. The young courtiers, the ambitious men who surrounded him saw with vexation the continued tutelage of the cardinal and the perpetuation of the king's insipid childhood until he was more than thirty years of age; they perceived that there was but one way to emancipate him and make him master, namely: to give him a mistress. He had had them for years, but always as a school-boy and under the good pleasure of the cardinal; he needed one, the courtiers thought, who would be really mistress and make him his own master.

Cardinal de Fleury being dead, intrigues were more rife than ever; the point was, inasmuch as the king was so devoid of will, to know what hand should seize the tiller. Mme. de Tencin, who would fain have pushed her brother, the cardinal, to the head of the ministry, knew not how to lay hold of the apathetic will of the monarch. She wrote to the Duc de Richelieu, who was then at the war, and begged that courtier to write to Mme. de Châteauroux and urge her to draw the king from the lethargy into which he had sunk in relation to public affairs.

"What my brother has said to him as to this," she adds, "has been useless; it is, as he wrote you, talking to stones. I cannot conceive of a man choosing to be a nonentity when he could be everything. No one but you would believe the point to which the thing has gone. What happens in the kingdom seems not to concern him; he is interested in nothing; in the Council he is absolutely indifferent; he agrees to whatever is presented to him. In truth, there is enough to make one desperate in having to do with such a man. One sees that in all things his apathetic nature turns him to the side in which there is least trouble, though it may be the worst side."

Mme. de Tencin and her brother, the cardinal, both so little estimable, judged of this matter as persons of *coup d'œil* and intelligence. In another letter she suggests the idea that it might be useful to induce the king to put himself at the head of his armies. "Not — between ourselves —" she added, "that he is fit to command a company of Grenadiers, but his presence will do much; the people love their king from habit, and will be enchanted to see him take that step, to which he could be prompted. The troops will do their duty better, the generals will not dare to shirk theirs as openly as they do now." This idea prevailed, thanks to

Mme. de Châteauroux, who, for one moment, made Louis XV. the phantom of a hero and the idol of the nation. Mme. de Châteauroux, then his mistress, had courage and spirit; she felt the generous inspiration and conveyed it. She tormented the king, who seemed to regret he was a king, by speaking to him of State affairs, of his interests, his glory. "You kill me," he said to her constantly. "So much the better," she replied, "a king should resuscitate." She did resuscitate him, and succeeded for a short time in making out of Louis XV. a prince conscious of honour who was not recognizable.

We are not so far from Mme. de Pompadour as we seem. It was this phantom of a king that Mme. d'Étioles watched as he hunted in the forest of Sénart and began to love. She dreamed I know not what of Henri IV. and Gabrielle. Mme. de Châteauroux having died suddenly, she told herself it was she who could replace her. An intrigue was at once set a-foot by her people. The details are obscure, and gossip is not history. But, with that absolute lack of initiative that characterized Louis XV., it was necessary to do for Mme. d'Étioles what had already been done for Mme. de Châteauroux, namely: *arrange* the affair for him. To princes, under such circumstances, officious intermediaries are never wanting. Mme. de Tencin, who had seen her first instrument, Mme. de Châteauroux, broken, concurred in replacing her by Mme. d'Étioles. The Duc de Richelieu on the contrary, was opposed to the latter; he had another candidate in view, a great lady; for it seemed as though to be mistress of the king the first condition was to be a woman of rank, and the advent of Mme. Lenormant d'Étioles, Mlle. Poisson! as the acknowledged mistress of royalty made a total revolution in the manners and morals of the Court. In this sense, especially, the affair was thought scandalous, and the great shade of Louis XIV. was invoked.

The Maurepas and Richelieus revolted at the thought of a bourgeoise, a "grisette," as they called her, usurping the power hitherto reserved to daughters of noble blood. Maurepas, satirical above all, stayed in opposition, consoling himself with making songs against her for twenty years; Richelieu, courtier above all, made his peace and was reconciled.

The year 1745, that of Fontenoy, was for Mme. d'Étioles one of triumph and great metamorphoses. Her connection with the king was already "arranged," and it was merely a question of when to declare it publicly. The king was with the army, and she at Étioles. He wrote to her letter after letter; Voltaire, who was staying at her house and whom she had induced to compose a comedy for the Court fête on the occasion of the marriage of the dauphin with the Spanish infanta lent himself to this play of Henri IV. and Gabrielle, and rhymed madrigal after madrigal about it:—

"He can love and he can fight;
He sends to this charming spot
Letters worthy of Henri IV.
Signed Louis, Mars, and Love."

The Abbé de Bernis was then at Étioles; he was said to be the lover of Mme. d'Étioles, but this is very doubtful. "He knew, shortly before, that she had *arranged* with the king." Those are Cardinal de Brienne's words, and I like to protect myself with such grave authority in so delicate a matter. But when the thing had been settled like an affair of State and the king was about to depart for the army, it became a question of forming the intimate society of the future marquise during his absence, and the Abbé de Bernis was suggested. He was faithful to his mission; he made pretty verses in honour of this royal amour, of which he was the confidant and almost the chaplain. Faithful to the tone of the day, Bernis, instead of seeing anything reprehensible in

this royal amour, paints it as a model of chastity and *modesty* worthy in all things of the age of gold. The amiable abbé, who sees no evil but that of inconstancy, assures us there will be no more of that: —

> "All will change; inconstant crimes
> Are thought no longer exploits;
> The *Modest* soul alone obtains our praise;
> And *constant* Love recovers all its rights;
> The example now is set by our great king,
> And by virtuous beauty."

Thus the young Pompadour enters Versailles with the title of "virtuous beauty," whose heart is enraptured by a faithful hero.

It all seems strange and almost ridiculous; but if we study the new marquise we shall see that there is truth in this manner of looking at the affair, and that the taste of the eighteenth century is genuinely in it. Mme. de Pompadour was by no means a *grisette*, as her enemies affected to say, and as Voltaire called her on one of his malicious days. She was a bourgeoise, a flower of finance, the prettiest woman in Paris, witty, elegant, endowed with a thousand gifts, a thousand talents, but with a manner of feeling which had neither the grandeur nor the hardness of aristocratic ambition. She loved the king for himself, as the handsomest man of his kingdom, as the one who seemed to her the most amiable; she loved him sincerely, sentimentally, if not with profound passion. Her ideal would have been, on arriving at Court, to charm him, to amuse him by entertainments taken from the arts, or from things of the intellect, to make him happy and keep him constant in a circle of varied enchantments and pleasures. A landscape by Watteau, games, comedies, pastorals beneath the leafage, a continual embarkation for Cythera, — such was her chosen scene. But,

once transported to the slippery floor of the Court, she could realize her ideal but very imperfectly. Kind and obliging by nature, she had to arm herself against enmities and treachery, and take the offensive to save herself from overthrow; she was led by necessity to politics and to make herself a minister of State.

Nevertheless, from the first (and here it is that I see her faithful to her origin), she brings a certain something of bourgeois sentiments, the affections and tastes of private life into even the brilliant scandals of her royal *liaison*. The Memoirs of her waiting-woman, Mme. du Hausset, inform us on this subject and show us with great naïveté of statement the true and habitual sentiments of Mme. de Pompadour. I will cite an example that will show what I mean.

Mme. de Pompadour had, by her husband, a daughter named Alexandrine, whom she educated with extreme care and destined for a great marriage. The king had by Mme. de Vintimille (sister of Mme. de Châteauroux) a son who was the picture of his father. Mme. de Pompadour wished to see this son of the master, and found means to bring him to Bellevue, where she was staying with her daughter. Leading the king into a conservatory where the two children were, as it seemed, by chance, she said to him, pointing to the pair, "They would make a handsome couple." The king was chilling, and did not give in to the idea. The Bourbon blood within him resisted the charm of such an alliance thus proposed. But she, without fully understanding his coldness, said to Mme. du Hausset as she thought it over:—

"If he were Louis XIV. he would make that child a Duc du Maine; but I don't ask as much as that: an office and patent of duke for his son is very little; it is because the boy is *his* son, my dear, that I prefer him to the little dukes

at Court. My grandchildren would share in a resemblance to their grandfather and their grandmother, and this mixture, which I hope to see, will some day make my happiness. The tears came into her eyes in saying these words," adds the honest waiting-maid.

We perceive, it seems to me, the bourgeois vein, perverted yet persistent, in this hope of Mme. de Pompadour; she brings ideas of affection, and family arrangement into even her adulterous connection. She has feelings; she thinks in advance as a grandmother, is moved by that thought. It was this side of her which so shocked the courtiers, and made them call her a *grisette;* it was caused by a good quality out of place in those high regions. Mme. de Pompadour represents on still other sides the middle-class at Court, and foretells in a way its advent, — an advent very irregular, but very significant, and very real.

She loved the arts and the things of the intellect as not one mistress of high rank had ever done. Reaching this eminent and little honourable position (much less honourable than she thought it), she at first considered herself as destined to aid, to call around her, and to encourage, suffering merit and men of talent of all kinds. Her only fame is there, — her best claim, as it is her excuse. She did everything to advance Voltaire and to make him acceptable to Louis XV., whom the petulant poet repelled so strongly by the vivacity and the familiarity of his laudation. She thought she found genius in Crébillon, and she honoured it. She favoured Gresset, she protected Marmontel, she welcomed Duclos, she admired Montesquieu and openly showed it to him. She would gladly have obliged Jean-Jacques Rousseau. When the King of Prussia bestowed ostentatiously on d'Alembert a moderate pension she advised Louis XV. — who was laughing before her at the sum

bestowed (1200 francs), compared with the term "sublime genius," in the letter bestowing it — she advised him to forbid the philosopher to accept it, and to grant him the double; which Louis XV. dared not do, from motives of piety, because of the Encyclopædia. It was not her fault that we cannot say "the age of Louis XV.," as we say "the age of Louis XIV." She would fain have made of this king so little affable, so little *giving*, a friend of the Arts, of Letters, and as liberal as a Valois. "What was François I. like?" she one day asked the Comte de Saint-Germain who claimed to have lived many centuries. "There 's a king I should have loved!" But Louis XV. could not bring himself to the idea of considering men of letters and intellect as of any account, or to admitting them on any footing at Court.

"It is not the fashion in France," said this routine monarch one day, when they were quoting the example of Frederick the Great before him; "besides, as there are more men of letters and more great seigneurs here than there are in Prussia, I should need a very large dinner-table to invite them all." Then he counted on his fingers: "Maupertuis, Fontenelle, La Motte, Voltaire, Piron, Destouches, Montesquieu —" "Your Majesty forgets," said some one, "d'Alembert and Clairaut —" "And Crébillon," he said, "and La Chaussée —" "And Crébillon junior," said another; "he is more amiable than his father; and there 's the Abbé Prévost, the Abbé d'Olivet —" "Well!" said the king, "for twenty-five years *all that* would have dined and supped with me!"

Ah! *all that* would indeed have been much out of place at Versailles; but Mme. de Pompadour would have liked to see them there, nevertheless, and to have brought about some connection of opinion between the monarch and the men who were the honour of his reign. In point of fact,

she was the most amiable and the prettiest of philosophers and by no means the most inconsequent, who, having a place at Court, would have liked to introduce there some of her own kind. "Have you regretted Mme. de Pompadour?" wrote Voltaire to d'Alembert on hearing of her death. "Yes, no doubt; for in the depths of her heart she was *one of us;* she protected Letters as much as she could; there's a fine dream ended!"

When, to amuse the king, she plays comedies in the private apartments Montesquieu has an air of laughing at her in a letter he writes to a friend (November, 1749): "I have nothing more to tell you, unless it is that the operas and comedies of Mme. de Pompadour are about to begin, and therefore that the Duc de la Vallière will be one of the first men of the age; and as nothing is talked of but balls and comedies, Voltaire enjoys a particular favour." But, among those ballets and operas at which Montesquieu sneered, they were also playing "Tartuffe;" and they played it within a few feet of the Court of the devout dauphin, and those courtiers who had neither place nor part in it were inconsolable.

In the entresol of the marquise at Versailles lived Dr. Quesnay, her physician, the patron and founder of the sect of the Economists. He was an original; a brusque, honest man, remaining sincere at a Court; serious with his "apish face," ever ready with ingenious apologues through which to make truth speak. While the king was with Mme. de Pompadour, Bernis, Choiseul, and the other ministers who governed with her, the Encyclopædists and the Economists were talking freely of all things in the entresol below, and settling the future. It seems as if the marquise had some consciousness of the storms that were gathering above her head when she said, "After me, the deluge!" It was that very entresol,

full of ideas and theories, which inclosed within it those cataracts of heaven which were sooner or later to break loose. There were days when around its table, dining together, could be seen Diderot, d'Alembert, Duclos, Helvetius, Turgot, Buffon, — *all that*, as Louis XV. said; "and Mme. de Pompadour," relates Marmontel, "unable to invite that troop of philosophers to her salon, would come down herself to see them at table and talk with them."

The privacy of letters was very little observed in those days; the director of the Post-office came regularly every week to bring to the king and Mme. de Pompadour extracts from the correspondence entrusted to him. When Dr. Quesnay saw him pass he flew into a fury against "that infamous minister," as he called him, to such a degree that he foamed at the mouth. "I would no more dine with that director of the Posts," he said, "than with the public executioner." Such remarks as these were made in the apartments of the king's mistress, and without danger, and for a period of twenty years. M. de Marigny, brother of Mme. de Pompadour, a man of merit and worthy of his sister on more than one good side, contented himself by saying, "It is integrity exhaling itself, not malevolence."

One day, this same M. de Marigny, being in Dr. Quesnay's lodging, they began to talk of M. de Choiseul. "He is nothing but a dandy," said the doctor, "cut out, if he were a little handsomer, for a favourite of Henri III." The Marquis de Mirabeau (father of the great tribune) entered, and with him M. de la Rivière. "This kingdom," said Mirabeau, "is in a very bad state; there are no energizing sentiments, and no money to take their place." "The country cannot be regenerated," said La Rivière, "except by a conquest like that of China or by some great internal upheaval; but sorrow to those who will then be in it; the French

people strike hard." "These words made me tremble," says the good Mme. Hausset, from whom we are quoting, "and I hastened to leave the room. M. de Marigny did the same, without seeming to be affected by what was said."

Connect these prophetic words with those that escaped from Louis XV. himself on the subject of the resistance of parliament: "Things as they are will last my time" — that was his end of the world.

Did Mme. de Pompadour contribute as much as people have said to the ruin of the monarchy? She did not hinder it, certainly. Nevertheless, given the character of Louis XV., it may have been the best thing that could have happened to that king to fall into the hands of a woman "born sincere, who loved him for himself, and who had rectitude in her mind and justice in her heart, which is not to be met with daily." That is Voltaire's opinion when judging Mme. de Pompadour after her death. Admit the class, and there was good in her.

Louis XV., so despicable in character, was not a man without intelligence, nor without good sense. Many apt sayings, piquant and sufficiently shrewd repartees are quoted of him, such as come readily from the princes of the house of Bourbon. He seems to have had some judgment, if that word is not too lofty to connect with the species of immobility and sloth in which he liked to keep his mind; but his greatest need of all was to be governed. He was a Louis XIII. turned into the eighteenth century, with the vices of his time, as base, as feeble, and much less chaste than his ancestor, and without his Richelieu. He could only have found the latter in a beautiful woman, and the finding of the genius of a Richelieu in the body of a Pompadour is not, perhaps, within the order of human possibilities. Nevertheless, Mme. de Pompadour comprehended after a time

that the mistress in her was worn-out, that she could no longer retain or divert the king by that power alone; she felt that there was but one sure means of maintaining herself, namely, to be the necessary friend and minister, the one to relieve the king of the trouble of *willing* in matters of State. She therefore became very nearly what he needed her to be; but in doing so, she forced her own nature, which was more fitted for the government of little cabinets and dainty pleasures. Here mythology ceases, and history begins — a far from noble history! When she had made the king dismiss the Comte d'Argenson and M. de Machault she governed conjointly with the Abbé de Bernis and M. de Choiseul. It was then that the world saw the political system of Europe overthrown, the ancient alliances of France interverted, and a whole series of great events undertaken at the mercy of the inclinations, the antipathies, and the too fragile, too personal good sense of an amiable woman.

Then was seen a most singular spectacle: that of an heroic and cynical King of Prussia contending with three women, three sovereigns, rancorous for his ruin, whom he characterized, each and all, energetically, — the Empress Elizabeth of Russia, the Empress Maria-Theresa, and Mme. de Pompadour, — behaving to them all as a man not accustomed to love the sex, or to fear it. On the other side was Louis XV., saying naïvely of this king, whose ally he did not know how to be, and of whom he was so often the beaten and humiliated enemy: "He is a madman who risks his all to win or lose; he may win, though he has neither religion, morals, nor principles." It is amusing to find Louis XV. believing that he himself had more morals and principles than Frederick.

Beaten without, for lack of a hero, in her duel with Frederick, Mme. de Pompadour was more fortunate within

the kingdom, in her war to the death against the Jesuits. She offered to make peace with them at a certain moment; they refused her advances, contrary to their custom. She was a woman, a clever woman, and mistress of the ground; she revenged herself. This time she did all the harm it was possible to do to those who had tried to harm her. Recent publications have thrown a vivid light on this interesting point.[1]

Thus we find in the career and influence of Mme. de Pompadour two distant epochs: the first, the most brilliant and favoured, began on the morrow of the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748): then she was completely in her rôle of mistress, young, in love with peace, with the arts, with the pleasures of the mind, counselling and protecting all delightful things. The second epoch is chequered, more often disastrous and fatal; this was the whole period of the Seven Years' War, the period of Damiens' attempt, of the defeat at Rosbach, and the victorious insults of Frederick. Those were harsh years, which aged before her time this frail and graceful woman, dragged into a struggle too severe for her. To judge of the precise degree of errors committed by each and all at this date, we must turn to the diplomatic papers relating to the ministry of Cardinal de Bernis and that of the Duc de Choiseul. My impression is, from a simple view of them, that things might have gone to worse, and that Mme. de Pompadour, aided by M. de Choiseul, did, by means of the "Family Compact" cover with a certain prestige her own errors and the humiliation of the monarchy and France.

It would seem as though the nation itself felt this, felt

[1] See "History of the Fall of the Jesuits in the eighteenth century, by Comte Alexis Saint-Priest; also Père Theiner's "History of the Pontificate of Clement XIV."

above all that after this brilliant favourite was gone the monarchy was fated to fall low indeed; for when she died at Versailles (April 15, 1764), the regret of the population of Paris, who would have stoned her a few years earlier, was universal. Mme. de La Tour-Franqueville, a witness not to be suspected, writes to Jean-Jacques Rousseau (May 6):—

"The weather has been so frightful here of late that Mme. de Pompadour must have had less regret in quitting life. She proved in her last moments that her soul was a composition of strength and weakness, — a mixture which, in a woman, is never surprising. Nor am I surprised to see her as generally regretted as she once was generally despised or hated. Frenchmen are the first men in the world for everything; it is quite natural they should be so for inconsistency."

One of those who seemed to regret her the least was Louis XV.; it is told that seeing from a window the coffin as it was being transported in the rain from the château of Versailles to Paris, he merely remarked, "The marquise will not have fine weather for her trip." His forefather Louis XIII. was heard to say at the hour of the execution of his favourite Cinq-Mars, "*Dear friend* must be making an ugly face just now." Beside this saying of Louis XIII., that of Louis XV. seems touching in its sensibility.

The arts felt grievously the loss of Mme. de Pompadour, and have consecrated her memory; if Voltaire, writing of her death to friends, could say, "She was one of us," with much more reason had artists the right to say so. Mme. de Pompadour was herself a distinguished artist. Directly, and through her brother, M. de Marigny, whom she had caused to be appointed Superintendent of buildings, she exercised the most active and fortunate influence. At no

period was art more living, more in touch with social life, which expressed and modelled itself through and by it on all sides. Rendering an account of the Salon of 1765, Diderot dwells first on an allegorical picture in which Carl Van Loo represents the arts, disconsolate and supplicating, imploring Destiny for the recovery of the marquise. "She protected them indeed," writes the critic: "she loved Carl Van Loo; she was Cochin's benefactress; the engraver Gai had his wheel in her house; fortunate indeed would the nation have been had she confined herself to diverting the sovereign by amusements and by ordering from artists their pictures and statues." And then, after describing the picture, he adds, rather rudely, methinks:—

"The suppliants of Van Loo obtained nothing from Destiny more favourable to France than to the arts. Mme. de Pompadour died at the moment when they thought her out of danger. Well! what remains of that woman who has exhausted us in men and money, left us without honour and without energy, and has overthrown the political system of Europe?—the Treaty of Versailles which will last as long as it may; the Cupid of Bourchardon, which the world will forever admire; a few engravings by Gai which will astonish future antiquaries; a good little picture by Van Loo which people will look at sometimes; and a handful of ashes!"

There remain other things; and posterity, or at least the amateurs who to-day represent it, seem to grant to the influence of Mme. de Pompadour and to rank under her name more objects worthy of attention than Diderot enumerates. I shall rapidly point out a few of them:—

Mme. de Pompadour had a fine library; very rich especially in works for the stage; a library consisting chiefly of French books, that is to say, books which she read, most of them bound with her arms (three towers), and some-

times with broad laces covering the sides. These volumes are still sought for, and bibliophiles give her a place of honour in their golden book beside the most illustrious connoisseurs whose names have come down to us. She pushed her love of the art so far as to print with her own hands at Versailles a tragedy by Corneille "Rodogune" (1760); only twenty copies of which were struck off. It may be said that these were only passing fancies, but they prove the taste and the passion for Letters in the woman who "would have loved François I."

There exists in the "Cabinet d'Estampes" a Collection entitled "Œuvre de Mme. de Pompadour," consisting of more than sixty engravings or etchings. They are chiefly allegorical subjects, intended to celebrate the memorable events of the day, but there are some which enter more into the idea we form of the charming artist: "Love cultivating a myrtle," "Love cultivating laurels." The Loves are there in every form, and even "Military Genius" itself is represented as Cupid meditating before cannon and flags. Not content with reproducing thus by etchings on copper the engravings on fine stones by Gai, Mme. de Pompadour seems to have used the lathe herself on fine stones (agate or cornelian). Her etchings were retouched with a graving-tool. In short, even in printing, she put, in many ways, her hand, her pretty hand, to work; she is of the trade, and just as the bibliophiles inscribe her on their list and the typographers on theirs, the engravers have a right to count in their ranks, with the title of associate, "Mme. de Pompadour, etcher."

The manufactory of Sèvres owes much to her; she protected it actively: there she often took the king, who, for once in a way, felt the importance of an art to which he owed his magnificent dinner-services, worthy of being offered as gifts to sovereigns. Under the near influence of Versailles, Sèvres

soon had original marvels to rival those of Old Dresden and Japan. Nowhere does the style called "Pompadour" shine with more delicacy and fancy, or better in its place, than in the porcelain services of that date. This glory, due to a fragile art, is more durable than many others.

While M. de Marigny, her brother, summoned Soufflot from Lyons to put him in charge of the construction of Sainte-Geneviève (the Panthéon), she interested herself eagerly, and contributed her share to the establishment of the École Militaire. Among the very small number of authentic letters which we have of her, there are two which give very valuable details on this subject. In one, addressed to a friend, the Comtesse de Lutzelbourg, she says (January 3, 1751):—

"I believe you have been very glad of the decree the king has just issued ennobling the military; but you will be still better pleased with one that is about to appear for an Establishment for five hundred young gentlemen whom the king is to educate in military art. This Royal school is to be built near the Invalides; it will be all the finer because his Majesty has worked at it himself for the past year, and the ministers have had nothing to do with it and did not know of it until he had arranged everything to his liking; which was done at the end of the last trip to Fontainebleau. I will send you the edict as soon as printed."

If the king worked at this himself and the ministers had nothing to do with it, we may be sure that he owed its inspiration to Mme. de Pompadour, for he was not a man to have ideas of that kind in his own head. Another and very familiar letter of Mme. de Pompadour, addressed to Pâris-Duverney, who had suggested to her the first idea of the École Militaire, shows her to us pursuing that noble project with solicitude:—

August 15, 1755.

"No, assuredly, my dear ninny [*nigaud*] I shall not allow to be wrecked in port an Establishment which ought to immortalize the king, render the nobles happy, and make known to posterity my attachment to the State and to the person of his Majesty. I told Gabrielle to-day to arrange to give Grenelle the necessary workmen to finish the work. My income for this year has not yet been paid to me; I shall use it all in paying the workmen fortnightly. I don't know if I can get any security for repayment, but I know very well that I shall risk, with great satisfaction, one hundred thousand francs for the welfare of those poor lads. Good-night, dear ninny," etc.

If the tone seems a little bourgeois, the act was regal.

All the masters of the French school of that day painted Mme. de Pompadour; we have Boucher's portrait, also that of Drouais, which Grimm preferred to all;[1] but the most admirable is certainly the pastel of Latour, in the Louvre. It is there that we must see the marquise before we permit ourselves to judge of her and form any idea of her person.

She is represented seated in an arm-chair, holding in her hand a sheet of music; the left arm rests upon a marble table on which is a globe and several books. The thickest of these volumes, which touches the globe, is volume four of the "Encyclopædia; "beside it lies the "Esprit des Lois," the "Henriade," and the "Pasteur Fido," bearing testimony to the tastes both serious and tender of the queen of this place. On the table, at the foot of the globe, is a blue volume turned face down, inscribed on its back "Pierres gravées;" this is her work. One engraving is loose and

[1] See this portrait in the Memoirs of the Marquis d'Argenson, in this Historical series. — Tr.

hangs down; it represents an engraver at work and bears the words, "Pompadour sculpsit." On the ground at the foot of the table is a box full of engravings and designs, marked with her arms; it is fairly a trophy. Farther back, between the feet of the console stands a Japanese vase (why not a Sèvres vase?); behind her chair is another chair or an ottoman with a guitar. But it is the person herself who is at all points marvellous in elegance, sweet dignity, and exquisite beauty. Holding the sheet of music lightly and negligently, her attention is suddenly attracted; she seems to hear a sound and turns her head. Is it the king who comes and is about to enter? She has an air of expecting with certainty, and she listens with a smile. Her head thus turned shows the outline of her neck in all its grace and her hair, very short and deliciously waved, the curls of which are in tiers, their blond tints just visible through a semi-powdering that scarcely covers them. The head floats in a light-blue atmosphere which is, in general, that of the whole picture. The eye is everywhere satisfied and caressed. An azure light descends and glides over all the objects. There is nothing in this fairy boudoir that does not seem to pay court to the goddess, nothing, not even the "Esprit des Lois" and the "Encyclopædia." The flowered satin gown gives place at the slope of the bosom to several tiers of those ribbon knots which were called, I think, "échelle de rubans," and which are here of a very pale lilac. She herself has the flesh and tints of a white lilac, slightly azured. This bosom, these ribbons, that gown, the whole ensemble blends harmoniously, or rather, amorously. Beauty shines in all its glow in the opened flower. The face is still young; the temples have kept their youth and freshness; the lips are equally fresh and have not yet withered, as it is said they did from being too often bitten and con-

tracted when forced to swallow anger or affronts. Everything in the face, the attitude, expresses grace, taste supreme, affability and amenity rather than gentleness, with the air of a queen, which she needs must take, but which, after all, is natural to her and is sustained without much effort. I might continue and describe still more of the pretty details, but I prefer to stop and send spectators to the picture itself; they will there find many things I have not ventured to touch.

Such, in her heyday, was this ravishing, ambitious, frail woman, who was, nevertheless, sincere, who remained kind in her eminence, faithful (I like to think this) in her fault, serviceable when she could be, vindictive, nevertheless, when pushed to it; who was, after all, truly of her sex, and whom her waiting-maid has shown to us in privacy without being too burdensome and overwhelming a witness. Mme. du Hausset's book leaves a singular impression; it is written with a sort of naïveté and ingenuousness which is honestly preserved in the midst of vice: "'This is what the Court is, corrupt from top to bottom,' I said one day to Madame, who was talking to me of certain facts within my knowledge. 'I could tell you many others,' she answered; 'but that little side-room in which you sit must often teach you much.'"

Mme. de Pompadour, after the first glamour of fairy-land was over, judged her situation for what it was, and, while continuing to love the king, she kept no illusion as to his nature, nor as to the species of affection of which she was the object. She felt she was nothing to him but a habit, and absolutely nothing else. "It is your staircase the king loves," the little Maréchale de Mirepoix said to her; "he is accustomed to go up and down it; but if he found another woman who could talk to him of his hunting and his business it would be all the same to him at the end of three

days." Mme. de Pompadour represented to herself those words as the strict and sad truth. She had everything to fear at every moment, for with such a man *all was possible;* a smile, or a more or less gracious look from him proved nothing. "You do not know him, my dear," she said one day to Mme. du Hausset, with whom she was talking of some rival who was trying to supplant her; "if he meant to put her in my place this very evening, he would treat her coldly before every one, and me with the greatest affection." He acquired this slyness from his early education under Cardinal de Fleury. Finally she cries out from a secret sense of her misery, and with an expression which cannot fail to surprise us: "Ah! my life is like that of the Christian — a perpetual strife. It was not so with those who won the good graces of Louis XIV."

But, in spite of all, she was the mistress who was fitted for this reign, the only one who could have succeeded in making something of it in the line of opinion, the only one who could have diminished the crying discord between the least literary of kings and the most literary of epochs. If the Abbé Galiani, in a curious page, loudly asserting his preference for the period of Louis XV. over that of Louis XIV., could say of this age of the human mind so fruitful in results, "No such reign will again be met with for a very long time," Mme. de Pompadour certainly contributed much to it. That graceful woman rejuvenated the Court; bringing to it the liveliness of her very French tastes, her Parisian tastes. As mistress and friend of the king, as protectress of the arts, her spirit was always fully on the level of her rôle and rank; as a politician she failed, she did harm, but not more harm perhaps than any other favourite in her place would have done at that epoch, when what we lacked in France was a real statesman.

When she felt herself dying after a reign of nineteen years, when she was forced at forty-two years of age to leave these palaces, these riches, these heaped-up marvels of Art, this power so envied, so disputed, but which she retained in her hands unbroken till her last day, she did not say, like Mazarin, with a sigh, "Must I leave all this?" She faced death with a firm eye, and, as the rector of the Madeleine, having come to visit her at Versailles, turned to go away, she said, "Wait a minute, Monsieur le curé, for I am going too."

Madame de Pompadour may be considered as the last in date of the mistresses of the king. After her, it is impossible to descend and enter with decency into the history of the Du Barry. The kings and emperors who have since then ruled in France have been either too virtuous, or too despotic, or too gouty, or too repentant, or too domestic, to allow themselves such inutilities; scarcely a vestige is now seen of them; Mme. de Pompadour remains the last in sight in the history of France, and the most brilliant.

To return to Cardinal de Bernis and the history of his ministry under Mme. de Pompadour, during the last year of it (1758) he does, as it were, nothing but invoke, and call to his aid M. de Choiseul. He seems to have early chosen and promised him to himself as his successor as soon as he had provided for the most pressing difficulties. His plan, after the victories won by the King of Prussia at Rosbach, and at Lissa, was to make peace. But what peace? will be asked. Could France and Austria negotiate on the morrow beneath the blow of a double defeat? There is a sentiment of dignity that goes before all else, of high national propriety and of honour in the crown, as they said in those days. This sentiment was in the heart of Maria Theresa, but

Bernis had it not; he reasons in all his letters very much as Madame de Maintenon did in those she wrote to the Princesse des Ursins, in which the word "peace" recurs on every page. Bernis explains himself clearly in a letter to Choiseul of January 6, 1758; he reveals to him his thought before he imparts it to the king.

"My advice would be," he says, "to make peace, and to begin it by a truce on sea and land. When I know what the king thinks of this idea, which is not according to my way of thinking, but which good sense, reason, and necessity present to me, I will give you the particulars. Meantime, try to make M. de Kaunitz [Austrian prime-minister] feel two things that are equally true: that the king will never abandon the empress, but on the other hand that he must not be ruined with her. Our respective faults have made of a great project, which, early in September, was infallible, a broken neck and certain ruin. It was a fine dream which it would be dangerous to continue,—though it might be possible to resume it some day with better actors and military plans more judiciously made. The more I have been closely concerned in this great alliance, the more I ought to be believed when I counsel peace."

That which Bernis evidently lacks in the whole of this purely political portion of his career is the nature and stamp of a statesman; having neither that character nor the appearance of it, he did not know how to obtain over his surroundings an ascendency which is never granted except to those who cannot be refused. Comprehending as a man of sense all the difficulties and the causes of the ruin, he sees no other remedy than to renounce promptly what had been undertaken with such levity. Choiseul, however, resists this advice; he sees the shame and danger of it; he makes objections and leads Bernis to explain himself on this

peace which is of a nature to break up the alliance. Bernis indicates his plan, which, after all, was never more than a sketch; it merely concerned, according to him, negotiating separately with the King of Prussia; but "the best way to bring that king to reason is to make peace with England; and it is of *that* that I think night and day" (January 25, 1758). This idea of a private peace with the English for which he had begun, he says, to build up little foundations, became almost impossible after the Convention signed in London, (April 11), between the kings of England and Prussia, into which the Court of Versailles never entered.

He began this year of 1758 with the blackest anticipations, too soon justified. A Colbert for the kingdom, a Louvois for the war, and a Louis XIV. on the throne were, undoubtedly, what was needed. Bernis has the merit of feeling, too late, this utter void, this nothingness; but while deploring them he has nothing with which to fill them; he is not of those who have the right to say, "I will!" Nature did not mark him on the forehead with the seal of command and authority; he pities himself perpetually and gives way.

In this series of lamentable confidences one feature in these letters makes me smile; I see, as it were, the seal and colour of the epoch and the remains of a frivolity which, in Bernis, still clung to the public man. In February, 1758, in the midst of the gravest circumstances, he accepts an elegant commission to be conveyed to M. de Choiseul: "Do not forget, I beg of you, my commission for a lady's dress, blue ground, embroidered in white silk on some spring texture." Slight accident! M. de Choiseul makes a mistake, the dress arrives with the despatches at the end of March. "The ground is white and the flowers blue, and I was asked to get a blue ground and white flowers — but they like it just as well as it is." And farther

on: "The gown is thought very pretty." The abbé-minister was not, we perceive, entirely on ill terms with chiffon gallantry.

The situation on the side of France was growing worse and worse daily. In this absence of all order and supreme direction the Duc de Richelieu chose to return to Paris as if he had nothing to do in Hanover; all the generals requested their return. The Comte de Clermont, prince of the blood, sent as commander-in-chief, made blunder after blunder. He began by a precipitate retreat of exaggerated length, which looked like a rout. It seemed as if this descendant of the Great Condé saw nothing more urgent than to put panic into the order of the day. Here, Bernis speaks with nobler accent: "As for me, I would rather have destroyed our army by a battle than by retreat; I even believe that such a course would have been to the preservation of the men . . . I thought I should die of shame and grief." And in another place he adds: "I composed the letter which the king wrote to the Comte de Clermont to prevent him from quitting the Rhine, where, inconceivable fact! he thought he was not in safety (April, 1758). The letter is firm and decided. But it is not enough to be strong at one moment; we must be so consistently and at all points. But how attain it? My only hope, which, after all, is only a woman's or a child's sentiment, is that if I am not dead of our shame it is possible that I am reserved to repair it. I would it might be so and that I might die immediately after it."

Let us count to his credit such words, in which he is only to blame for speaking a little too much of dying, and let us draw a veil over the hideous and circumstantial exposure he gives of the general degradation of that period — degradation which had even invaded the camps, that last refuge of honour! It is not possible, even after the lapse of a century, to read a

certain letter of Bernis, written March 31, 1758, without blushing. Never was the decadence of the monarchy of Louis XV. more nakedly exposed; we feel, from the nature of the evil, that it is very near to dissolution. A few traits, nevertheless, in this disheartening future must be excepted; the soldiers worn-out with fatigue, have kept their willingness, and are worth much more than those who command them. Bernis concludes the letter with a few words in which he does justice to the genius, so full of impetus, of the French race. His words are profoundly true, applying them — I do not say to the morals but — to the sentiments and spirit of our nation, which we have seen more than once turn and recover itself in a moment under a powerful hand.

It is here that the insufficiency of Bernis and at the same time his honesty manifest themselves; he begins to be sick, morally and physically. His nerves are affected; exposed to the universal attack of public opinion which is now wholly declared in favour of the King of Prussia, without direct means of remedying the evils and disasters of each passing day, obliged to provide for the subsidies of the allies, sensitive to the fear of failing in his engagements if money fails (and money is very often delayed), — under the pressure of all this he utters cries of distress and does not hesitate to enter into disagreement with Mme. de Pompadour. She can permit all; he owes her all, he will never quarrel with her; but neither does he conceal what he considers the full truth on the situation, and she does not thank him for it. The finances, nominally directed by M. de Boullongue, are exhausted; all resources depend on Pâris-Montmartel (brother of Pâris-Duverney); it is he who supplies the funds, and the controller-general is, in a way only his clerk. The country is on the point of bankruptcy

in April, 1758, for twelve millions of notes drawn for the navy, which Bernis fears will be protested.

Here Bernis shows himself again subject to delusion. Filled with the idea that what is wanted is unity of management, a single motor, a prime-minister in fact, and with some such title, he deludes himself so far as to believe that it might be himself, that Mme. de Pompadour could desire nothing better than that such a minister should be a friend whom she could govern. He presents a memorial to the Council on this subject, proving the necessity of a sole and chief direction. Let us do him the justice to say that he does not seem to have dwelt long on the idea of being himself prime-minister. He inclines to propose the Maréchal de Belle-Isle, who would really, he thinks, exercise authority.

In Paris, the exasperation of the public mind had reached its height in this summer of 1758, and it lasted until a few successes of M. de Broglie the following year broke the cruel uniformity of reverses. "They threaten me in anonymous letters," writes Bernis; and a second defeat of M. de Soubise would have sufficed to make the populace stone Mme. de Pompadour in the streets of Paris.

By this time Bernis had reached a state that was one of disease, of downright nervous exhaustion, infinitely honourable in its origin, but which must have made him little fit to perform the rôle which, in his heart, he no longer had any ambition to play. "Do not speak of me again for the first influence," he writes in sincere tones to Choiseul; "you do me wrong; I seem to be prompting you and to be solely ambitious, when I am really only a citizen and a man of good sense." In August, 1758, he opens himself freely to Choiseul, proposing to him to become his successor. This proposal was not a lure; Bernis thought what he said. His delusion

was to suppose that after being the influential minister of the first rank he could step back at will, associate with himself a colleague, not a rival, blend intimately with him, and under this agreeable form, which he defines himself as "two heads under one cap," do good to the State, all the while relieving himself of the sole and odious weight of the burden.

Choiseul is made duke (August, 1758). Bernis is about to be made cardinal; this is the moment when the ministerial combination meditated by the latter, and on which he counts, is to be sealed and accomplished. But it was not enough to persuade Choiseul and convince him that he ought to be minister; it was necessary to also persuade Mme. de Pompadour and the king. The proposal was not at first agreeable to them. Bernis had drawn up a memorial to the king in favour of Choiseul, which Mme. de Pompadour was to give to him. She disliked and resisted the idea of a change. We shall not get the key to this ministerial revolution and its secret spring, which lies in the mental condition of Bernis, unless we read the truly desperate letters which he writes from time to time to Mme. de Pompadour. They are not those of a minister or statesman; it is a sick man who writes and enumerates the symptoms by which he is attacked, — colics that last ten hours, frequent and increasing giddiness, obstinate insomnia.[1]

One political idea mingles with the uneasiness and growing agony of Bernis: M. de Choiseul was not so directly committed as himself to the policy of the alliance, and on his entrance to the ministry he would be free to break or

[1] Sainte-Beuve, when he wrote this, had no knowledge of Bernis' autobiographical memoir. The reader, who has the memoir in these volumes, will see that Bernis, though his nerves gave way, was not a valetudinarian, but an over-worked honest man, who tried to make headway with reasonable ideas against the corruption, apathy, and intrigues around him, and became worn-out, for a time, in the struggle. — Tr.

modify what had been done by others. "None but a new minister can make new engagements. The Duc de Choiseul is the only one who can maintain the king's system or undo it." That is Bernis' just idea; but so long as he applied it to himself personally and turned it against himself the idea became to him a stinging and intolerable remorse; and it is this which explains the word "dishonour" which returns so often under his pen. "Remember," he writes to Mme. de Pompadour on the evening of September 26, "that it is impossible that I should be the one to break the treaties which I have made."

It is not for us to reproach Bernis for so honourable a sensibility; but it is evident that his *morale* was more affected than was suitable in a man charged with conducting great public affairs, and that ministerial responsibility would be henceforth too much for him. He sent his memorial to the king, in which he developed with some energy his motives, and gave an undisguised exposition of the state of things. In it he continued to cling to his chimera, namely to remain in the Council after resigning his portfolio to M. de Choiseul, intending to help out the new minister, and to be helped out by him. Louis XV., displeased, made no answer on that point; he simply consented to Bernis' resignation in favour of M. de Choiseul, in a letter dated October 9, 1758.

Choiseul could do nothing but return at once from Vienna; but the king and Mme. de Pompadour continued displeased with Bernis. It was at this moment that he received the cardinal's hat; he had been loaded with favours and benefits for the last two years; appointed successively Abbé de Saint-Médard, Abbé des Trois-Fontaines, and Commander of the Saint-Esprit; they might wonder, therefore, that he wearied of serving at the very moment when he could

scarcely obtain any further increase of fortune. Malicious remarks circulated in the salons of Paris and Versailles; words were put into his mouth which he disavowed; he was made to say that he retired because he wanted peace and Mme. de Pompadour did not want it. It was whispered about that the king was angry with him for resigning the ministry of Foreign Affairs.

During these last weeks, Bernis was kept explaining at every turn; the position, as it went on, became untenable. The arrival of M. de Choiseul, at the end of November only complicated matters; for, however loyal and sincere the successor and the predecessor might be and were, it was impossible that good friends at Court should not do their best to put them on bad terms. The delusion and, if I may say so, the good nature of Bernis in this position, knowing the Court as he did, show themselves in his not having considered in advance these difficulties, which were wholly inevitable, and came from the very nature of things.

Louis XV. cut short the difficulty by an order, which Bernis received December 13, exiling him to his abbey near Soissons; a letter of his to the king written on receiving the order, and another written in the evening of the same day to Mme. de Pompadour, express sentiments of perfect submission and infinite gratitude for the past, without a single word of complaint.

Four days later, from his château of Vic-sur-Aisne, near Soissons, where he was to pass his exile, he wrote to M. de Choiseul to assure him that he did not impute his dismissal to him, and to regulate their future intercourse. His correspondence with M. de Choiseul, taken as a whole, certainly does not elevate Bernis; it gives and fixes his measure as a leading minister, and it answers a question which I put to myself as I entered upon this subject: he had not the

stamina of a statesman, and after the excitement of his first successes, his organization, put to too strong a test, manifestly gave way. He was reserved, however, for a second rôle, more sheltered, more pacific, where, limited to diplomacy and official representation, he recovered the use and full development of his happy qualities and his useful courtesy.

As to the state of France in those fatal years and those worst moments of Louis XV., the letters of Bernis are a very sad revelation; and it is honourable for him to have been the first to feel and to express that profound sadness which they continue to communicate to the present day. At the same time, we issue from the reading of these letters disposed to do justice to M. de Choiseul, who, from a situation so compromised, so lost in fact, was able to draw results sufficiently specious, sufficiently brilliant to cast a veil over the decadence of France, and raise the nation in its own eyes, while awaiting its regeneration through convulsions, and its entrance, valiant and rejuvenated (but always according to the spirit of the chiefs who guided it), into the sphere of its new destinies.

Let us return to the general character of Cardinal de Bernis, whom I did not at first intend to take so politically nor in a manner so grave. That which seems to me especially to be remarked in him, as in many personages of the upper French clergy of the eighteenth century, is the mixture of worldliness, philosophy and grace, which, little by little, brought them, by good sense and good taste, to respect and esteem; these prelates of rank, entering too lightly into their calling, nevertheless acquired the spirit of it with age; they became at a given moment Churchmen in the best acceptation of the word, without ceasing to be men of the world and agreeable socially; then, when persecution came,

when the hour of trial and danger struck, they found within them both courage and constancy; they had the honour of their calling; true gentlemen of the Church, they were ready to share affliction and misfortune, as they had formerly sought benefices and privileges. This was, with few exceptions, the part played by the upper French clergy during the Revolution. Those of these prelates who survived it, and who were seen to reappear after the Concordat, such as the Boisgelins, the Baussets, and others, present to us a special physiognomy, at once venerable and smiling; they shine in pure and polished literature of an elegance that is tempered by holiness; but Bernis is, in a way, the leader and senior of them all. He died in Rome, stripped of everything, in the height of the Revolution, but he would have worthily passed through all trials to its end. He was — if it is permitted to thus interpret hearts — he was of those who, in those memorable hours when acts of sacrifice were demanded, recovered their catholic faith through Honour, and, rising from the frailties of their past, became true Christians through the force of being honest men.

In December 1758, Bernis, then just fallen from the ministry, was in exile at Vic-sur-Aisne, near Soissons, and the first months, in spite of his philosophy and the gentleness of his soul, must have been rather painful to him. He had his family near him, but he did not yet dare to receive his friends or ask for the necessary permission to do so. M. de Choiseul watched (and sincerely we may believe) for opportunities to oblige him at Court and to serve him; he took the idea very early of giving him the residence of Rome, but the way had to be prepared for it. "On my side," Bernis writes to him, May 14, 1759, "I am thinking only of binding myself to my profession, and of giving to the course I take in this direction the time, the reflection and the honesty which are

due to my principles and my character. . . . I shall always be ready to serve the king when you think I can be useful to him. It is in my heart to do so, but my situation does not allow of my asking it. When I speak of serving the king I do not mean, as you can well understand, an office at Court, for on that point I have neither plan nor hope."

He was to enter the priesthood about the year 1760, being then forty-five years of age. His nervous illness still continued and made him desire a change of climate. The idea of going to Rome as the king's minister pleased him much; but he desired not to go until he was a priest, and besides that a bishop. There was talk as early as 1760 of giving him the bishopric of either Lisieux or Condom; the latter would have suited him best, as being in his native region. But a difficulty lay in the oath which he was required to take as bishop before the king himself. Louis XV., who, although he had neither bitterness nor animosity against Bernis, would have felt embarrassed and annoyed at seeing him again so soon. Five long years went by, softened no doubt by visits from friends and by the journeys and sojourns he was allowed to make in the South among members of his family; but for all that, they were five years of exile and forced separation from social life. It was not until January, 1764, that his disgrace ended, and a ray of favour appeared; on which Bernis wrote as follows to Voltaire (January 16, 1764):—

"The king has given me for a New Year's present, my dear colleague, the best of all benefits,— freedom, and the permission to pay my court to him, which is most precious and dear to a Frenchman who has been loaded with favours by his master. I was received at Versailles with all sorts of kindness. In Paris the public showed its joy; the makers of horoscopes have had a hundred idle fancies on the subject, each more extravagant than the others. As for me, who

have long learned to bear both fortune and misfortune, I have escaped from congratulations, real and false, and have returned to my winter home, whence I shall go from time to time to pay my duty at Versailles and to see my friends in Paris. The older persons at Court have served me with friendliness, so that my heart is much at ease; and I have never hoped for a position more agreeable, more free, more honourable."

The horoscopes were too hasty; Fortune is often slower in deciding on her method of return than in giving her first favours. Appointed Archbishop of Alby in the same year (May, 1764), Bernis had to employ himself in his diocese longer than he expected. He did so with propriety and even with zeal, for he was good and had that humanity which, at need, is ready for a time to do the office and function of charity. Nevertheless, the sacred spark did not inspire him; ennui was frequent, and he had long hours of distaste for his life. It was too much to have to practise a second time and for so many years the saying of his youth, "I will wait." In vain had he said, "I love Letters; they have done me more good than I have done them honour;" Letters alone did not suffice him. It was time that public affairs and the world should return to occupy this lively and brilliant intellect. Pope Clement XIII. died, and Bernis received from M. de Choiseul, February 21, 1769, an order to start without delay for the Conclave. Rome henceforth was to be his residence and almost his country, for as soon as the Conclave ended he was appointed ambassador and his great career began once more.

During his years of exile and of residence in his diocese, and even during the first period of his life in Rome, he kept up a correspondence with Voltaire, which was published for the first time in 1799, by M. de Bourgoing, and is very agree-

able reading.[1] Bernis does not pale at all before his formidable correspondent. To judge properly of the tone of this correspondence we must not forget the respective positions of the two personages. Voltaire had known Bernis as a poet and a man of gallantry; he had seen much of him in society and under his first form of frivolity and dissipation. Bernis had, moreover, the honour of being his colleague in the French Academy, where, singular to relate! being twenty years younger and with so slender a kit, he had preceded him. There was, therefore, between them a familiarity of good taste, the limits of which were rather undecided. Voltaire, when he saw Bernis become a cardinal, an archbishop, and thus involved in the highest dignities of the Church, was disposed to treat him with all flattery and laudation on condition of mingling therewith more than one malicious jest, and, if allowed to do so, more than one religious impertinence. Bernis could not, without being pedantic and ridiculous, appear to perceive all the irreverence of his colleague, and still less to be shocked by it. It sufficed him to turn it aside, indirectly, with a witty saying; or sometimes, if Voltaire went too far, to recall him to propriety by disguising the advice with praises. He does not fail to do this; Bernis has the merit of remaining true to himself in this correspondence; he knows how to take a jest, and he also knows how to stop it discreetly when it passes the proper bounds. To judge rightly of the spirit of these letters they should not be taken in detached passages, but should be read as a whole.

The first letter from Voltaire to Bernis is written near the close of the latter's ministry, when he was about to be made

[1] The correspondence with Voltaire is not included in these translated volumes. But Sainte-Beuve's account of it is given here as affording the reader a glimpse of a side of Bernis that does not appear in his other letters, which are chiefly political or relating to public matters.—Tr.

a cardinal. Voltaire congratulates him the moment that he hears of it: "I ought to feel more interest than others in this agreeable news, inasmuch as you have deigned to set my calling above that of Cardinal Richelieu." And he pushes flattery, at the moment, so far as to say: "I do not know if I deceive myself, but I am convinced that your ministry will be fortunate and great; for you have two things which have gone out of fashion, — genius and constancy."

After this the correspondence stops and is not resumed for three years; it begins again during Bernis' exile (October, 1761): "Monseigneur, thank God who has caused you to still love Letters! With that taste, a stomach that digests, two hundred thousand francs a year, and the red hat, a man is above all sovereigns . . ." Bernis replies by at once putting his witty correspondence on the tone and point that he desires: —

"I am not ungrateful, my dear colleague; I have always felt and owned that Letters have been more useful to me than the most fortunate chances of my life. In my early youth they opened to me an agreeable door into the world; they consoled me for the long neglect of Cardinal de Fleury and the inflexible harshness of the Bishop of Mirepoix. When circumstances pushed me, almost in spite of myself, upon the great stage, Letters made the world say of me, 'At any rate, he knows how to read and write.' I quitted them for public affairs, but I never forgot them, and I now return to them with pleasure. You wish me a good digestion; that is not possible now. For twelve years I have been very temperate, but I have a gouty humour in my body which has not yet fixed itself on the extremities, and may oblige me to go and consult the oracle of Geneva [Doctor Tronchin]. In this plan there is as much desire to see you again as to be cured of my gout."

Let me be permitted here to make a remark on the way of living and diet of Bernis. It was not what might be supposed from the accounts that are given of his sumptuous table, and the plumpness that we see in his portraits. Bernis' cook was already celebrated in the days of his embassy to Venice; and we have seen Algarotti fearing his temptations to gluttony, which he knew that he could not resist. The cook of the ambassador to Rome had no less reputation, and Bernis felt bound one day to write to M. de Choiseul in reply to foolish rumours set afloat on the luxury of his table: "A good or a bad cook makes people talk or say nothing about the cost of an ambassador's table; but that cost is none the less, whether the table is well or ill served, though the result is very different." It is recorded that Bernis, at the sumptuous table he offered to others, lived himself frugally on a wholly vegetable diet. "I dined at our ambassador's with Angelica Kaufmann," writes Mme. Vigée Le Brun in her Memoirs. "He placed us at table on each side of him; he had invited several foreigners and a part of the diplomatic corps; so we were thirty at the dinner, of which the cardinal did the honours perfectly, while eating himself only two little dishes of vegetables." This was true of Bernis in 1790, and was already an old custom with him in 1761.

Bernis also reduces what Voltaire says about his income of two hundred thousand francs. He had not at that time one hundred thousand, nor even that until his debts were paid; but in the end he was fairly and honourably provided for. "It is much," he says, "for a younger son of Gascony, even if it is little for a cardinal. The deacons of the Roman church do not have as much; and I am not sorry to be the poorest of the French cardinals, because no one is ignorant that it depended only on myself to be the richest." That Bernis really had this tranquillity and content of which he

speaks, and that it was his fundamental condition during his years of inaction and exile, I should not dare to say; it is enough that he tends towards it, and turns to it, whenever possible, by reflection, and that his natural disposition is never at war with his desire.

Voltaire sends Bernis some of his writings before publication; he consults him on his tragedies and asks his advice, which Bernis gives him in detail, conscientiously and with sincerity. "Cassandra" was written in six days, and Voltaire boasts of it, calling it "The Six Days' Work." Bernis advises him to put six more into improving the style of the play and perfecting it. He gives his reasons as a judicious critic and a good Academician. These innocent consultations are interspersed with jests, more or less keen, on all sorts of subjects. When Voltaire introduces politics, Bernis evades them pleasantly. The name of Richelieu often returns to Voltaire's pen as if to convey an indirect flattery: "Ah! how people act and judge! how few act well or judge well! Cardinal Richelieu had no taste; and, good God! was he as great a man as they say? I have perhaps at the bottom of my heart the insolence of . . .; but I dare not . . ." Bernis never answers these insinuations, and turns a deaf ear to such exaggerated and, in fact, insolent praise from a satirical man.

When, however, he is touched in a more truthful manner, he makes answer, and does it admirably. Voltaire, seeing him still in the inaction of private life, and excusing himself for finding nothing better with which to cheat the years than the writing of tragedies, says to him: "But what is there better to do? Must we not play with life till the last moment? Is not life a child to be rocked till it sleeps? You are still in the flower of your age; what will you do with your genius, your acquired knowledge, and all your

talents? That puzzles me. When you have built at Vic you will find that Vic leaves a great void in the soul, which must be filled by something better. You possess the sacred fire, but with what aromatics are you feeding it? I own that I am infinitely curious to know what will become of a soul like yours." Bernis replies with a thought, and, so to speak, a voice, of enchanting sweetness: —

"You are troubled for my soul in the void of idleness to which I am henceforth condemned. Acknowledge that you think me ambitious, like all my kind. If you knew more you would know that I entered office a philosopher, and that I left it more of a philosopher than ever, and that three years of retirement have strengthened that manner of thinking until it is now unshakable. I know how to occupy myself; but I am wise enough not to let the public share in my occupations. To be happy I needed only that liberty of which Virgil speaks: '*Quæ sera tamen respexit inertem.*' I possess it in part; with time I shall possess it wholly. A hand invisible led me from the mountains of the Vivarais to the summit of honours; let it act; it will know how to lead me to an honourable and tranquil condition. And then, for my lesser pleasures, I shall, in the order of nature, be the elector of three or four popes, and I shall see again that portion of the world which once was the cradle of the arts. Is not this enough to rock that child which you call life?"

The singular sweetness of this philosophy, so truly Horatian, asks pardon for the *légèreté* that still mingles and will long continue to mingle in it. Let us note, however, the "hand invisible," which is not in Horace, and to which Bernis confides himself; and let us remember that when the days of serious adversity and ruin come, the cardinal-archbishop, hearing of the rigorous spoliation with which he

and all the clergy of France are threatened, wrote to M. de Montmorin: "You must have remarked, monsieur, on a hundred occasions, that there never was a bishop-ambassador of the king in Rome more moderate than I, more friendly to peace, more conciliating; but, if I am driven to bay by unjust and indelicate demands I shall remember that, at an advanced age, a man should concern himself only in rendering to the Supreme Judge a satisfactory account of the accomplishment of his duty." These last words of Bernis ought to remain ever present with us as a height in the far distance when we abandon ourselves with him to the amusements and human charms of the journey.

In action, he may have had his vanities, his illusions of self-love, his desire to appear to have done more than he really did do; but in repose and in reflection, in presence of himself, he is always modest. Voltaire, in this less human than he admits, laughs at times to see the King of Prussia, his "old ingrate," worn-out, and the implacable struggle of the hunters and the wild-boar going on. "Laugh," he cries, "and profit by the folly and imbecility of men. Here, as I believe, is Europe at war for a dozen years. It is you, by the way, who belled the cat. You gave me then an infinite pleasure. . . ." Bernis is not at all proud of the whole of that rôle which Voltaire attributes to him: "We will talk some other day of the bell you say I fastened. . . . I knew an architect to whom it was said: 'You are to make the plan of this house, but be it understood that, the work once begun, neither the diggers nor the masons nor the mechanics are to be under your direction, and they will set aside your plan as much as they please.' Whereupon the poor architect flung down his plan and went to plant cabbages."

He does not regret the ministry on the conditions under

which he left it, and he sums up his political situation by a decisive saying which is at once a very true judgment and an honourable avowal in him who utters it: "I feel with you how fortunate it is for me that I am no longer in office; I have not the necessary capacity to re-establish matters, and I am too sensitive to the misfortunes of my country." He tries to console himself as best he can, to recompose in this idleness, which, let him say what he will, languishes somewhat, an ideal of a philosophical and sufficiently happy life: "Reading, reflections on the past and the future, a persistent forgetfulness of the present, walks abroad, a little conversation, a frugal system, — all this enters into the plan of my life; your letters will be the charm of it." This last point is not mere politeness; no one could better enjoy than Bernis the mind and the superiority of Voltaire in all that he did well: "Write me from time to time; a letter from you embellishes a whole day, and I know the value of a day." The manner in which Voltaire receives his literary criticisms and takes account of them, stirs him to applause: "You have all the characteristics of a superior man: you do well, you do fast, and you are docile."

Bernis has not, in literature, so timid and effeminate a taste as one might think from his own verses. Voltaire sends him on one occasion Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar" and Calderon's "Heraclius," calling them farces or follies to amuse him and put him in good-humour; to which Bernis replies in a letter full of grace and good sense: "Our secretary [of the Academy] has sent me Calderon's 'Heraclius,' my dear colleague, and I have just read the 'Julius Cæsar' of Shakespeare; both plays have given me great pleasure as serving to show the history of the human mind and the particular taste of nations. We must agree that

those tragedies, however extravagant and coarse they may be, do not weary, and I must tell you, to my shame, that these old rhapsodies, in which there are from time to time flashes of genius and very natural sentiments, are less odious to me than the cold elegies of our mediocre tragic writers." It was not exactly with the intention of producing this result that Voltaire had sent them; the true and serious literary lesson came from him who might have been thought the least serious.

I fasten to the honourable sides of this correspondence, to the parts which show in Bernis a man who has propriety of bearing without pedantry, a gentle wisdom which does not let itself be encroached upon. I read in the index of the edition of Voltaire prepared by Miger for the estimable Beuchot: "Bernis proposes to Voltaire to translate into verse the Psalms of David." Absurd! Bernis had too much tact to make Voltaire any proposal of that kind. But Voltaire is tempted constantly to send Bernis other things than tragedies; he would like to send him his Tales, his lighter writings, "what pleases the ladies. But I dare not," he adds, restraining himself with difficulty. To which Bernis always answers, especially after he is an archbishop: "If you send me verses, be sure that they are such as I can boast of. I am neither a pedant nor a hypocrite, but surely you would be grieved if I were not what I ought to be and seem." And another day he says: "Send me your decent Tales [*Contes honnêtes*]; and, as it is very reasonable that I should preach to you a little, I beg you to sometimes quit the lyre and the lute for the harp. That is a noble style in which I am sure you could be more lofty, more moving than any of your predecessors." That word "harp," lightly used, is far indeed from being a proposal to Bernis to "translate the Psalms!"

There is a fine passage on Bernis' side in this correspondence. Voltaire has sneered too flippantly on a certain day; he has written to the cardinal a gay and even a jocose letter for New Year's day (1767), sending him his tragedy of "Les Scythes," and saying: "As for me, puny creature, I make war to the last moment: Jansenists, Molinists, Fréron Pompignan; to right, to left; and the Protestants, and J.-J. Rousseau. I get a hundred thrusts, I return two hundred, and I laugh. . . . All is equal at the end of the day, and will be still more equal at the end of all days." Bernis answers him, and this answer, fully understood, is, from end to end, a wise and noble lesson. First, he makes a few criticisms on the tragedy of "Les Scythes," which are less remarks, he says, than doubts: "I love your fame, and it is that which makes me, perhaps, too difficult to satisfy." Then he congratulates Voltaire on the talent which God has given him to correct the follies of his epoch, and to correct them with a laugh, making others who have retained a taste for "good company laugh also. Writers sometimes ridicule this good company before they are admitted to it, but it is very rare that they seize its tone; now, that tone is nothing else than the art of never shocking any propriety." He points out certain absurdities of the day which are subjects ready-made for ridicule. "It is droll," he says, "that pride rises as the period lowers: to-day nearly all our writers want to be legislators, founders of empires; and all the gentlemen want to pull down the sovereigns." And he ends by a counsel which Voltaire too little regarded, but which if followed would have been, in place of the universal sneer to which he gave himself up, a supreme ideal for the great writer in these years of his old age: —

"Laugh at all that, and make us laugh," says Bernis, developing his plan; "but it would be worthy of the finest

genius in France to end his literary career by a work which would make men love virtue, order, subordination, without which all society is in trouble. Gather up those traits of virtue, humanity, and love for the general good which are scattered through your works, and compose another which shall make us love your soul as much as we admire your mind. That is my prayer for this new year; it is not above your powers; you will find in your heart, your genius, in your memory, so well furnished, all that can render your work a masterpiece. It is not a piece of pedantry that I ask of you, nor a stupid sermon, it is the work of a virtuous soul and an upright mind."

It seems to me that we grasp in this passage the spirit and meaning of Bernis' correspondence with Voltaire, and that this leading desire and prayer redeems the rather risky concessions which the gracious prelate seems to make in other places to the allurements of his correspondent. For myself, it is thus that I like to read the writings of celebrated men, — drawing from them all there is of best and most elevated; it seems to me that this brings us nearer to the truth, even from the point of view of history.

In explaining why he so little regrets the life of Paris during the years of his exile, Bernis returns more than once to the idea that politics have become too much an habitual subject of conversation: "Men and women have to-day in their heads the idea of governing the State. It is a perpetual and wearisome dissertation, for nothing is so flat as superficial politics." He repeats this thought with grace and renewed vigour, summing up in a piquant manner the various fashions and infatuations which he had witnessed in his youth. "As regards Paris (1762), I do not desire to live there until conversation is better, less passionate, less political. You have seen in our day how all the women had

their witty man, then their geometrician, then their Abbé Nollet; now I am told they all have their statesman, their politician, their agriculturist, their Duc de Sully. You feel how wearisome and useless all that is; so I await without impatience the day when good company shall resume its ancient rights; for I find myself quite out of place among all these modern little Machiavellians."

Bernis never returned to live in Paris. What would he have said on the approaches of '89? What would he have said later? But he has the merit of having been among the first to feel and point out that which was corrupting the witty, elegant, and lively taste, and the original gaiety of our nation.

We have now seen enough to know what to think of Bernis as to intellect and judgment. I am therefore surprised to see with what indifference, with what a tone of superiority, writers who are more or less historians have spoken of him when they meet him as a witness and diplomatic confidant of the great affairs of Rome. I have read with care the principal works in which he is mentioned as cardinal-member of the Conclave, in 1769, and afterwards as ambassador to Rome for more than twenty years. These works, which contain fragments, and even series of letters and despatches from Bernis, during this last half of his life are: "History of the Fall of the Jesuits," by Comte Alexis Saint-Priest; "Clement XIV. and the Jesuits," by M. Crétineau-Joly; "History of the Pontificate of Clement XIV.," by Père Theiner; "History of the Pontiffs Clement XIV. and Pius VI.," by M. Artaud. These various works, which I am far from putting on the same line, and the last of which is worthy of very little esteem, have this in common, that they all rely at every moment on documents emanating from Bernis, and that their text in very many pages is made

up of them. Père Theiner is the writer who, having under his eyes the greater part of Bernis' despatches, probably from the minutes made after his death and deposited in the Vatican, enables us to-day to form the best grounded and most complete judgment on them. I shall here confine myself to giving my general impression on Bernis' line of conduct in Rome during his first years there, and in that famous negotiation for the suppression of the Jesuits in which he took much part.

Bernis arrived at Rome in March, 1769, and entered the Conclave, which had then been open for a month. He had not at first the leading influence which had been expected, and on which he had been congratulated. He had his apprenticeship to make; he had prejudices to overcome. He, who was soon to acclimatize himself so well in Rome, to espouse its habits, and feel and contribute to its noble hospitality, was at first severe, even to injustice against his colleagues, the Princes of the Church, and towards the Roman people in general. His letters to the Marquis d'Aubeterre, ambassador from France before him (letters which have been partly published and give the bulletin and journal of the Conclave), show a reverse side to the tapestry, which, in all matters, and particularly sacred matters, cannot be divulged without exciting some surprise and a sense of impropriety. It needs a very judicious reader to correct the exaggerated and disproportioned impression made upon the mind by such revelations; an effect greater than the narrator himself intended to produce. We are shown a thousand indiscreet and rash conjectures, of which nothing came. Bernis, perceiving in the last days of the Conclave that Cardinal Ganganelli had the support of the Spanish cardinals, rallied to him and contributed at the last moment to make his election unanimous. But it cannot be said (as so many have stated from courtesy, and as he allowed

them, not unwillingly, to do) that he himself caused the election. "It was he who made Pope Clement XIV., and who formed his Council," says Voltaire. Nothing could be less true than that assertion.

He scarcely knew this pope; at first he distrusted him; he believed he had formal and mysterious engagements with Spain, contracted at the close of the Conclave, on the subject of the abolition of the Jesuits. It was not until later, and after more ample knowledge, that he saw his mistake on this point, and returned to a more correct opinion of the man and the pontiff. In December, 1769, Bernis, writing to M. de Choiseul, says: "I found the pope in good humour on Monday last; his gaiety depends on his health and the persons with whom he has been talking. His Holiness is sufficiently master of his words, but not at all of his face. The more one sees of him, the more one recognizes in him a basis of justice, kind-heartedness, humanity, and the desire to please, which makes him respectable and amiable. I am persuaded that after the affair of the Jesuits is over every one will be satisfied. He goes slowly, but he does not waver." Bernis never departs from this judgment on Ganganelli.

As to the part that he himself had to play in this affair of the suppression of the Jesuits, which lasted four years before it was consummated, it is fully related in the work of Père Theiner. Bernis personally was in no way hostile to the famous Society. When it was suppressed in France he wrote to Voltaire: "I do not believe that the destruction of the Jesuits will be useful to France. I think it would have been better to govern them properly, without destroying them."

But the affair once undertaken, he regards it as policy, and even as a necessity, to complete it. As for the means, he desires and advises that they be slow, moderate, as humane,

and as conciliating as it is possible to make an action of such vigour. So, when he sees the Pope delaying, and constantly opposing delays to the urgency of the powers, and especially that of Spain, Bernis, though he thinks these delays excessive, makes his Government understand that they are natural, and to a certain point, necessary.

One day, at the beginning of the negotiation, Spain, and subsequently France, wished to limit, by a sort of ultimatum, the delay to two months. "I own," writes Bernis to M. de Choiseul (August, 1769), "that if I had been elected pope I should have destroyed the Jesuits, but I should have employed two years in doing it." Ganganelli took four; it was the same method, only carried a little farther. Bernis, aside from the rare instants when he was forced to take the initiative, confined himself to assisting Spain, which imperiously exacted of the pope the suppression of the Society; but while aiding the Spanish ambassador, he often strove to moderate the harsh summons of that Court and to set aside all ways of intimidating the pontiff, at the risk of compromising himself and seeming lukewarm to his allies. In thus acting he was entirely true to the spirit of his instructions and to the bent of his own individual nature. He ended by becoming between the pope and the Spanish ambassador the usual intermediary, and a conciliator who was agreeable to both. "I am the anodyne to each," he says.

The summing up of Bernis' conduct in this great and long affair lies in those words. He was as much of a mediator as was possible in the most irritating of questions. He won the esteem and the affectionate gratitude of Clement XIV., who treated him with all the confidence that was in his nature to bestow, and with a distinction which resembled private friendship. One day the pope made him a gift of various title-deeds and original documents concerning the

church at Alby, adding to them a brief (letter) in which he loaded him with marks of honour and proofs of tenderness. Shortly before his death he appointed Bernis Bishop of Albano, thus treating him altogether as a Roman and a cardinal of the papal house. So, at the death of the pontiff, when irritated passions sought to wreak vengeance on his remains, and the catafalque, placed in Saint-Peter's, was not safe from outrage during the novena of the obsequies, Bernis, faithful to his friendship and respect for the illustrious dead, kept, at his own cost, a guard night and day around the coffin to preserve the inscriptions and prevent all scandal.

Bernis, full of authority by this time and of influence in the Conclave, contributed a good share towards the election of Pius VI. (February, 1775), obtaining the new pope's friendship and a degree more of confidence. During this time he continued to represent France at Rome with dignity, grace, and magnificence. All travellers who have spoken of him echo this. Mme. de Genlis, who visited Rome during these years, accompanying the Duchesse de Chartres, dwells much on the reception the ambassador gave to her Royal Highness. "Cardinal de Bernis, to whom I had announced the arrival of Madame la Duchesse de Chartres, sent his nephew, the Chevalier de Bernis, as far as Terni to meet her, with two carriages, one magnificent to bring her to Rome, the other supplied with an excellent dinner. The cardinal received us with a grace of which nothing can give the idea. He was then in his sixty-sixth year [he was not so old], in very good health, with a face of great freshness. In him there was a mixture of *bonhomie* and shrewdness, nobleness and simplicity, which made him the most agreeable man that I have ever known. I have never seen a magnificence that surpassed his." After various details on which she dwells with pleasure, and which prove to what

point the splendid host knew how to mingle his pomp and his Roman lavishness with that French quality called precision, Mme. de Genlis adds: "Cardinal de Bernis gave Madame la Duchesse de Chartres magnificent *conversaziones*, that is to say, assemblies of two or three thousand guests. They called him 'King of Rome,' and such he was, in fact, through his magnificence and the esteem and consideration which he enjoyed."

Cardinal de Bernis speaks of himself less emphatically; and he tries sometimes to excuse the grandeur of the establishment. "I keep," he says, "the inn of France in the public square of Europe." He had his palace on the Corso, where he held his Court, and his house at Albano for the *villegiatura*. Show with him was only external. "He has," says President Dupaty, "the readiest welcome, the most equable intercourse." The character of his politeness was easy and graded, just as his mind seemed, towards the last, more gentle and reposeful than brilliant.

The events of the Revolution came to put his firmness to the proof. He saw this almost royal opulence, which he had enjoyed for nearly twenty years, and which he used with a truly august liberality, escape him suddenly, and poverty return when he was sixty-six years old; he continued the same man. "When turned of sixty-six years of age," he says, "we ought not to fear poverty — only this, that we may not fully do our duty." I have already quoted many of his noble sayings. He understood the question posed by the Constituent Assembly to its fullest extent, and, forestalling, as early as November, 1790, the hour of the "Concordat," he says: "If men really loved Good, peace, and order, if they were attached to religion, which alone is the support of all authority and of all forms of government, no pope would ever be so drawn towards conciliation as this

one. But if the purpose is to destroy all and make a new religion, we shall meet with difficulties greater than we know. The deep roots of religion are not to be torn so easily out of the hearts and minds of a great kingdom."

It is on these last words that we like to rest with Bernis. The circle of his life is accomplished, and he shows as he ends it that his amiable, prudent, and fine qualities, joined to delicacy of heart, may become virtues.

On the 5th of January, 1791, being summoned to take the oath exacted by the new Constitution, he sends it, adding an interpretative and restrictive clause. Informed that the National Assembly required the oath to be taken as it was, pure and simple, and warned that he exposed himself to be recalled if he persisted in his restriction, he answered, February 22: "Conscience and honour do not permit me to sign without modification an oath which obliges me to defend the new Constitution, of which the destruction of the ancient discipline of the Church is an essential feature." The recall was given.

Thus was closed his long and honourable diplomatic career. He died in Rome, November, 1794, in his eightieth year. After the loss of his salary in France, he subsisted on a pension granted to him by the Court of Spain. Happy, nevertheless; and favoured to the last in being able by his final sacrifices to redeem and expiate, in a way, the laxity of his early life; confessing a religion of poverty through salutary adversity, and proving that there was in him, under all forms, both amiable and dignified, a sincere foundation of human and Christian generosity.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

THE following volumes contain Cardinal de Bernis' own Memoirs, and the letters to M. de Choiseul, Mme. de Pompadour, and Louis XV. to which Sainte-Beuve refers. At the time the latter wrote his essay (1853) the Memoirs were not published, and he appears not to have known of them. M. Frédéric Masson, librarian to the ministry of Foreign Affairs, obtained them from the family of Cardinal de Bernis and first published them, together with the letters above named, in 1878. From that edition this translation is made.[1]

The following is M. Masson's account of these documents:

"The Memoirs, the existence of which was known and affirmed by the editor of the Pâris-Duverney letters (1790), by the Chevalier d'Azara (1795), by M. Albert de Boys (1843), and lastly by the Duc de Broglie (1870), but of which no extracts have been printed up to the present time, are now intrusted to me by the Bernis family, on the testimony which M. P. Fougère, minister plenipotentiary and director of the Archives of Foreign Affairs was good enough to give of me. General the Vicomte de Bernis had long determined to make this publication. He had prepared the principal elements of it, and I have only annotated and put in order the materials he had collected. . . .

"The manuscript of the Memoirs is not in the handwriting

[1] "Mémoires et Lettres de François-Joachim de Saint-Pierre, Cardinal de Bernis. Publiés avec autorization de sa famille, d'après les manuscrits inédits; par Frédéric Masson; Bibliothécaire du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères." 2 vols. Paris. E. Plon et Cie. 1878.

of the Cardinal. It was dictated by him to his niece, the Marquise du Puy-Montbrun, and is entirely written by her. For a century, except for a time when it was in the hands of the Chevalier d'Azara, editor of 'Religion Avenged' and of the Correspondence between Voltaire and Bernis, it has been steadily in the possession of the Bernis family. Its authenticity is therefore, *a priori*, indisputable; and if it were necessary to find proofs *a posteriori*, the text of the Memoirs offers others no less positive.

"As for the series of private letters addressed by Bernis to the king, to the Marquise de Pompadour, and to the Duc de Choiseul-Stainville, their authenticity is no less incontestable. In 1825 M. de Barante revealed the existence of these letters in the 'Revue Française,' and gave some fragments of them. In 1853 Sainte-Beuve drew from them one of his brilliant articles. And, lastly, in 1873 M. Aubertin used them in a volume entitled 'L'Esprit public au XVIII^me^ Siècle.' It was, doubtless, from a copy — either that in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or that in the possession of the Chancellor Pasquier — that all these writers drew their information. At first, I had myself the manuscripts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; but hearing that the Duc de Mouchy possessed certain interesting papers on Cardinal de Bernis, I addressed myself to him, and he was good enough to confide to me the precious volume containing all the letters written by Bernis and the letter to him of Louis XV. It is from these autograph documents that I have been permitted to collate the present edition."

It is interesting to observe how the Memoirs, published twenty-five years after the date of Sainte-Beuve's essay, confirm the analysis therein made of Bernis' character.

MEMOIRS AND LETTERS

OF

FRANÇOIS-JOACHIM DE PIERRE,

CARDINAL DE BERNIS.

LETTER

WRITTEN TO MY NIECE, THE MARQUISE DU PUY-MONTBRUN.

I CHOOSE you for my secretary, my dear niece, and almost for my confessor; I could not give you a greater mark of friendship and esteem, if it be true that unlimited confidence is the proof of both.

I will now explain to you the intention of these Memoirs. It is natural to men to leave behind them a monument of their existence; they also feel a certain sweetness in recalling the principal events of their lives; self-love finds its gratification in all that; and I shall not deny that I am susceptible up to a certain point of a weakness so natural: but as I do not wish to hide from you my most secret thoughts or my inmost feelings, I shall tell you in all sincerity that the chimera of making myself talked of after my death is not the object I propose to myself in dictating to you the Memoirs of my life. My intention and my most positive orders are that this work shall not see the light, even

after my death. You will regard that clause as the most explicit article in my will. You must therefore avoid with the greatest care allowing any one to take a copy of this memoir; and you must confide the trust after you to safe and tried hands. You will perceive in the course of the work the essential motives which make, for me as well as for you, this reserve into a law. I shall tell the truth; and truth cannot be shown in its nudity without great impropriety.

My design in telling you the history of my life is to instruct you and correct myself, to confirm me in principles of which I have experienced the good, to strengthen me against ideas whose false gleams have dazzled or led me astray, and to gather from my past life useful instructions for the future. The pleasure of distracting and occupying my mind at a time when I am deprived of work enters for much, I acknowledge, in this employment; not to speak of the interest that I take in your children. If they are destined to lead a private life, they will find in the first periods of mine examples to follow and faults to avoid. If, on the contrary, Providence calls them to great offices, they will see what the force of circumstances can do within the space of ten years to lift men up and throw them down; they will learn to count duty as everything and fortune as nothing; or, perhaps, after seeing the faults I committed as a courtier, they may learn how to conciliate with more art than I did the obligations of a minister with the necessity of pleasing the Court. That art is difficult, I own; the hand must be light indeed which can practise it in such a manner that faithfulness and integrity shall not receive the slightest shock.

I shall divide these Memoirs into three parts. The first will contain the events of my private life. In the second I shall treat of the most remarkable epoch of my life; I

mean that in which I devoted myself to public affairs. The third part will contain my views and principles, with a few political memoranda, the most important of which and the most secret being retained in the archives of the Foreign Affairs. Any one may compose, if he likes, a fourth part from my literary works. The first amusements of my youth being no longer suited to the serious profession I have embraced will be arranged under the dates at which they were written, in order that persons may not attribute unjustly (as they frequently do) to the Cardinal what belonged to the Comte de Bernis in his earliest youth, before he bound himself in any manner to the Church or the ministry.

I shall write in chapters, because this form is more convenient[1] and the facts can be more easily classed and with better order; besides which, as I do not wish to fatigue my mind or my memory by this method, I shall not be a slave to exact chronological order, nor to the thread of a too connected narrative. I shall study myself chiefly to make you understand my mind and that of the epoch in which I have lived. I shall paint my soul and that of others, less concerned to retrace events than to develop their causes and their impulse.

In regard to style: do not expect me to employ much art; it is long since I have renounced academic adornment. Assuredly, I do not despise eloquence, but I do not place it in the symmetry of words: we lose much time in writing with a certain elegance; it is easier, shorter, and perhaps more agreeable to express one's thoughts very simply.

Finally, you must not be scandalized when I say good of myself; the foundation of my nature is modesty, but I

[1] As many of these chapters are very short, some of them not more than two or three pages and therefore very wasteful of space, several are put together in the following translation. — Tr.

do not believe I fail in it by thinking of myself as favourably as a judge would do if he read to the bottom of my heart.

Now that is enough to make you understand the object of these Memoirs. In choosing you, at the age of twenty-three, to write them at my dictation, I give, as I believe, great praise to your manner of thinking and to your character.

MEMOIRS.

PART FIRST.

I.

1715–1735. — My Birth. — Childhood. — Education. — My Coming to Paris. — Entrance at the Seminary. — My Journey to Languedoc. — Return to Paris in 1735.

I WAS born, May 22, 1715, in the château de Saint-Marcel, on the Ardèche, in Vivarais. The *seigneurie* of that little town has belonged to my family for four hundred years. It is a good title of nobility; it is as indisputable as the possession, never interrupted, of the same fief. The magistracy of this estate was formerly much divided. In other days Saint-Marcel was the residence of various seigneurs, some of whom were considerable, as much by their birth as from their possessions. To-day the Marquis de Bernis, my brother, is the sole possessor of the estate, which, from its extent and the beauty of its scenery, is one of the principal in the Vivarais. The king, by letters-patent, has erected this estate into a marquisate under the name of Pierre-Bernis.

My family name (for only princes of the blood-royal should say "house") is de Pierre, Latin Petri. The name is very ancient in the province of Languedoc; it is cited with distinction in the history of the first crusade. The name Bernis has been borne for four centuries by the younger sons of the family, who have never failed to include in their titles the rank of seigneurs of this estate,

which is situated between Nîmes and Lunel. This care on their part shows the attention they paid to preserving their rights in this possession, which entered the family of their ancestors in 1245 through a marriage.

But I do not pretend to make our genealogy here; I have known, all my life, how to appreciate, better than others, the fortuitous merit of birth. I shall have occasion, in the course of these Memoirs, to express myself on what concerns nobility. Those of you who wish to know more about our origin have only to read the article in Moréri concerning me; it is done with simplicity and truth; and is confirmed by indisputable title-deeds. I shall content myself by saying here, for the honour of my race, that the heads of our family were all great seigneurs, and the younger sons, from whom I descend, have been distinguished by their fidelity to their princes, their attachment to the Catholic religion, their military services, and by the most scrupulous integrity. My branch, in particular, has a considerable advantage in never having injured by any bad alliance the purity of its origin. My paternal grandmother was so well-born a damoisel that she gave me a double descent from the royal house, and from alliances with the greatest families in Europe. All this is amply set forth in my proofs for the Order of the Saint-Esprit.

My father, who was born with all the advantages that usually lead a gentleman to great fortune, for want of prudence and patience never derived any benefit from twenty years' service. Born for war and for society, he had the barren reputation of being a good officer and an agreeable man. In 1704 he asked for a regiment of cavalry, and they offered him one of infantry; he refused it and left the service, after having squandered about a hundred thousand crowns.

My mother, Élisabeth du Chastel de Condres, who had been married as an heiress, on account of the disinheriting of a brother, was reduced to a very small patrimony by the discovery of an entail which settled all the property of her family on the males. She therefore brought my father only a small estate, a very ancient name, fine alliances, much intelligence and virtue, a taste for letters, but little talent to re-establish the affairs of a household. My father, who advised his friends well, always took the worst counsels for himself; he had abandoned for a small sum in ready money, (which, by the way, he valued highly) his assured rights to the considerable property of the Vicomtes Gourdon and de Blou-Laval. Reduced to a very small income he kept his gaiety, and never lost the tone of society in his retirement. Gay with others, ill-humoured at home, he treated his daughters harshly, made an effort to educate his two sons, but refused to buy for the eldest a suitable employment in the army. This species of inhumanity broke my brother's neck, for he was born with all the talents necessary for war, with a mind and a strength of body which would have done him even more honour in the days of chivalry than in our age. He could have attained to everything.

My sisters were not better treated than my brother. The eldest, condemned by her father to the cloister, only escaped that rigorous sentence by the charms of a pleasant face and the reputation of a gentle and cultivated mind. These advantages made the Marquis de Narbonne-Pelet, the head of that ancient and illustrious house, ask her in marriage without a *dot*. My second sister, who was endowed only with a good heart, had the merit of refusing to be a nun when her father tried to compel her to it; but she afterwards took that course voluntarily when she became the mistress of her own fate. As for me, I have none but thanks to give to my

father. He never refused anything to my early education; and later, when he diminished the help he was giving me, I had found resources within myself and was flying on my own wings. I therefore respect and cherish my father's memory; my supreme happiness would be to still have him with me, to share with him the fortune he never doubted I should attain, and thus enjoy the society of the gayest, most elequent man and the best company I have ever met, in Paris, at Court, or in foreign lands.

My birth nearly cost my mother her life, and I have often attributed, with some appearance of reason, the infirmities under which I have suffered to the long labour of her confinement. Being the younger son, I was nursed in the country in a rustic cottage which I have often seen again with pleasure. My nurse, who was a good farmer's wife, had but little milk and she soon accustomed me to eat cabbage-soup and lard; and perhaps I owe to that coarse food the strength of my organs which have so often resisted violent maladies. My intelligence was not long in developing. If the faculties of memory are a proof of it, I can remember quite distinctly the time I was weaned; and my first sensation was the astonishment produced in me by the shadow of bodies; I looked, without fear but with intense surprise, at those phantoms which appeared in the light against the wall of my room and grew shorter and longer in a manner so exciting to my curiosity, but which I could not comprehend. It might not be useless to the history of the human mind to collect with more care than has yet been done the first sensations and dawning ideas of childhood. As soon as I could walk and turn my eyes above and below and around me, nothing struck me more than the spectacle of nature; I never wearied of looking at the sky and the stars; of examining the changes that took place in the air; of following the

movement of the clouds and admiring the colours painted on them; the rocks, brooks, and trees attracted my attention no less. I examined, not with the eyes of a naturalist but with those of a painter, all insects and plants. I would often pass hours in watching the different spectacles of nature. The observations I made in my childhood were so impressed upon my memory that when I cultivated poetry I found I had more talent and foundation than others for painting nature in true and sensitive colours.

The distinctive character of my mind has always been reflection; I reflected as soon as I could think. I do not mean that I was not a child with others of my age; but from the time I was six years old I preferred to all amusements the pleasure of listening to people who talked well; my father was often surprised that I stayed with him when I might have been frolicking with my comrades. This singularity began to give me a reputation for intelligence, which was increased by reflections which were thought beyond my years. I shall not repeat here the clever sayings of my childhood; I thought them dull and insipid when repeated to me; but it is nevertheless true that a child is beyond others when he has more ideas than those of his age.

My mother, who was very pious, and had enough intelligence to teach virtue without mingling it with pettiness, impressed upon me early a love and fear of God; those feelings have never been effaced. I have never loved any thing so much as God, although in my youth I loved many things very keenly and even madly. I owe, therefore, to my mother a love of religion, and to my father, who was not pious but who had a lofty soul, nobility of sentiments and attachment to Honour.

I was destined to be a Knight of Malta. That military career, to which I was vowed from my cradle, had turned all

my inclinations to the side of war. This taste of my childhood is not entirely destroyed; I have often found in my mind many views relating to the military art, and I have sometimes regretted that it was no longer the fashion to put cardinals at the head of armies.

I shall finish this account of my childhood by two reflections which thousands of people have made, but which are none the less important. I was born with much courage, intelligence, and bodily strength, yet the trumpery tales of nurses and chambermaids inspired me with a ridiculous terror of ghosts and witches. For twenty years of my life I was more afraid of the dead than of the living. Neither reason nor instruction would alone have sufficed to calm this ridiculous but mechanical fear. I owe the cure of this malady to an adventure which will find its place later, if I happen to think of it.

The second reflection that I wish to make is that nothing is so dangerous for morals and perhaps for health as to leave children too long under the care of chambermaids, or even of young ladies brought up in the châteaux. I will add that the best among them are not always the least dangerous. They dare with a child that which they would be ashamed to risk with a young man. I had need of all the sentiments of piety which my mother implanted in my soul to preserve my youth from great corruption.

My mother gave me the first instructions in Christianity, and the first notions of reading and writing. But they soon gave my brother and me a tutor, a worthy and well-informed man. I learned from him the elements of the Latin language, and to him I owe the taste I have always kept for reading good books. As soon as I could read and pronounce, the cadence and harmony of verse struck my ear; I lisped rhymes before I knew how to write prose; they noticed this,

and they carefully took away from me books of poetry. My mother, whose father was the best song writer of his region, had rather more indulgence for my little talents. I used to show her my productions secretly, and she had the kindness and patience to correct them. Her astonishment was very great to find that my verses bristled with Gallic words, and she could not understand how I came to use terms that were out of date by a hundred years. I took good care not to reveal the source of my erudition; it was an old copy of Ronsard which I kept hidden under my bed and to which I owed my fine knowledge. He was my first master in poesy, but I proved to be only an ungrateful pupil, for I have carefully avoided imitating him all my life. They said that I made passable verses when the Infanta of Spain (now Queen of Portugal) was sent back to Madrid. What was singular in this talent so early shown for poesy is that the farther I advanced in a career of study, the more my fancy for versification weakened, until it was extinguished altogether. It did not wake up again before I was eighteen years old, as we shall see later.

I said that they gave me an honest man for a tutor. He left me at the end of two years to take degrees in the Faculty of medicine in Paris. This excellent man, named Lejeune, was replaced by a Seminarist, whose ill-directed piety had heated a head already narrowed by nature and education. This worthy personage made me fast on bread and water on the eve of all the feast-days, compelled me to leave half my dinner for my guardian angel, made me say my prayers four times a day with my knees on iron spikes, ordered me to wear bracelets of the same metal also spiked, chastised me, not to correct me, but to feed me with the spirit of repentance. It would have been a great crime to complain, a crime which would have been very severely

punished. My parents did not know of my hidden austerities until they saw the abscesses which came on my knees and wrists. They dismissed the pious fanatic, and I passed successively under three or four preceptors, ignorant, brutal, or licentious. I here warn fathers and mothers that they ought to forbid the tutors of their sons to correct them with the whip or *discipline* [whip made of small chains].

Without being more of a rogue than other boys, I passed three years under the rod. Anger, at last, got the better of me, and after vainly meditating various projects of vengeance, my head being full of the "Comte de Gabalis," a book that I believed to be full of all the mysteries of the cabala, I resolved to vow myself to the powers of hell, to become a great magician, and transform my unworthy tutor into a stone or a tree; and with this resolution I rose one morning at four o'clock and went into a solitary place at daybreak; there I made my invocations and conjurations, but all to no purpose. Nothing appeared. Then, believing that the powers of darkness might appear to one more readily in obscurity, I went down into a cellar, not without some fear. My trepidation became terror when, having begun my invocation in a loud voice, there issued from beneath the casks a big black cat, which rushed, miauling, between my legs, and which I took to be the devil. My hair stood on end and I fled hastily, believing that all hell was after me. This adventure made me reflect. Remorse followed reflection; I confessed first to my mother, who did not fail to frighten me with the enormity of my crime; she was too well educated, however, not to know how to appreciate it. I was only seven years old; but they made me confess to the grand-vicar, and I was absolved. Since then I have not had much taste for sorcery.

Disgusted with domestic education, my father resolved to

send me to the Barnabite school in the Bourg-Saint-Andéol, in Vivarais, a little town known for some very remarkable antiquities. Here I cannot dispense with making one observation. The profession of tutor ought to be more honoured, for it is one of the most important; but those who fill that post are, at best, regarded as the head servants of the household; their wages being very paltry, their rewards none at all or very uncertain, how can you find on such terms instructors who are capable of forming the minds and hearts of young men? Domestic education has other drawbacks; it nourishes vanity in children; they think themselves superior in rank because they hear their parents and their valets say so; their ideas are narrowed to the conversations of their fathers and mothers. In a word, I prefer school education to family education, because in schools boys are equally corrected by the lessons of their superiors and by their comrades; the latter never allow an absurdity to pass, nor any false pretence; they accustom each other to reciprocal consideration, and prepare the mind to submit to different tones, and adapt itself to diversities of temper, usages, and characters. It is said that in schools morals are not in such safety as in private houses; I think that opinion is inaccurate; valets and servant-women are more to be feared than comrades, because they are less watched. I can cite myself as an example: I kept, throughout my schools and seminaries, my morals very pure, together with great piety until my entrance into the world.

So I was sent to the Barnabite school when I was ten years old. I was always first in my class, and I must say, more to my shame than my praise, that I employed, in order to succeed, a method that I have since made use of in more important ways. This method gratified and fed a certain stratum of laziness, self-love, and rivalry, all of which are

in my character. Every time that in my studies I found equals, rivals, and superiors, I worked without relaxing, night and day, until I managed to put them behind me; then, satisfied to have the first place, I contented myself by keeping it with easy work, without caring to deserve a better.

I made good studies at the Barnabites; and one day when I did not know how to fill a letter I was writing to my father, having no longer any hope of the Cross of Malta, I bethought me of replacing it by the crozier of a bishop; so I announced my vocation for the ecclesiastical profession. My father answered that I must examine it seriously; I declared that I had made my reflections; then they put me into retreat for a month in a Seminary, after which I was tonsured, at twelve years of age. Eighteen months later my father sent me to the college of the Jesuits in Paris; as will presently be seen.

I said that my father had ruined his affairs. He nevertheless resolved to give my brother and myself a suitable education, and, to obtain the means of doing so, he took the course of writing to Cardinal de Fleury, with whom he had been very intimate in his youth, though he had little followed up the intimacy after the cardinal had become minister. My father wrote with some dignity; knowing how to speak of poverty without asking alms; his letter to the cardinal produced more than he had hoped for. His Eminence replied that he had not forgotten the old friendship, and remembered the misfortunes that had come upon my father; he said that my father's children were very young, and he himself too old to hope to be useful to them; but that as I was entering the ecclesiastical profession, I must be sent to finish my studies at the Jesuit college in Paris, and thence to the seminary of Saint-Sulpice; after which,

when I reached the age of eighteen, he would ask the king to give me an abbey, and by means of that favour I could help my family. In consequence of this answer my father determined to send my brother to the pages of the king to do his exercises, and me to the college of Louis-le-Grand. I owe my fortune to this determination. Had I remained in the provinces, I should have grown old as grand-vicar of Viviers, brilliant in the diocese and unknown to the rest of the world.

My father, on the day of my departure, having embraced me without any outward sign of tenderness, said to me these words, which engraved themselves on my soul as he uttered them: "My son, you are going into a world in which I have lived much; I shall not be useless to you there. I would gladly have taken you there myself, but I am now too old. Remember that in that world you will find many equals and a vast number of superiors. Make yourself beloved by the first; and never be familiar with the others; respect them, but never fawn upon them. Learn to obey, but remember that you were not born to be the valet of any man. If the fear of God does not keep you from women, fear at least to lose your health." In saying these words he kissed me again, and then saw with a dry eye my brother and myself get into the carriage, which took us to Paris under the care of his old valet.

I arrived at the Jesuit college, in August, 1729. My expectation was to enter rhetoric after the holidays. The inspector [of school studies], having examined my capacity, thought me not fitted to enter third. My self-love was wounded by this verdict; I set myself to study with such diligence, taking hours from sleep, reading and writing by moonlight, that finally, at the end of two months, I was allowed to be again examined for rhetoric, and was received

into that class without difficulty. It is true that I was not at first in the front rank, but at the end of three months of industry I reached the highest places, and then according to my usual custom, I went to sleep upon my laurels as soon as I felt I had no rivals to fear; only waking up now and then when my comrades, by dint of hard work, threatened to take my place. Vanity won me another success; I arrived in Paris with a Languedocian accent; the jests of my comrades made me lose it in three months. These examples and many others prove that if self-love is the root of all vices, it is also the spur to many virtues.

I did my rhetoric under the two most famous professors who had appeared for a long time: Père Porée and Père la Sante. The first was one of the most worthy men I have ever known; the pupils loved him as a father, and respected him as their master; he knew the classics, he made us feel better than any one all their beauties; yet modern taste drew him to its works, though it never ruled in his lessons. He loved the stage passionately, and was himself an excellent actor; his soul, which was seen in all his gestures, made the art of declamation disappear. To his many talents he added virtues that were simple and sincere. He was a saint, very severe for himself, very indulgent for others. His colleague, Père la Sante, had much imagination, a fuller and more flowery style than that of Père Porée; gay, even a trifle jocose, he was fond of *bons mots*, and made himself liked, but not enough feared. At the end of my rhetoric year, this good father proposed to me to enter the Society of the Jesuits. I consulted Père Porée in confidence; he dissuaded me, saying: "My child, that does not suit you; you will some day be a pillar and light in the Church." God grant that that opinion may some day be justified.

Another very celebrated Jesuit had also a very high

opinion of me, namely: Père Tournemine, man of rank and the ugliest of his epoch. This Jesuit had superficial, but rather extensive knowledge; which ranked him for some time among learned men; his imagination was lively and singular; his zeal led him by preference to the conversion of unbelievers; his room was always full of sceptics, deists, and materialists; he never converted any of them, but he had the pleasure of discussing, arguing, and spending a part of his life with men of intellect.

My life in college was most edifying; my childhood had been serious; my reputation for goodness was such that they confided to me the care of young men who were not permitted to leave college or even take a walk in the streets on holidays. This commission often gave me much pain and uneasiness, but I fulfilled it with the approbation of my superiors, and without losing the friendship of my comrades.

Before quitting this subject I must relate a rather singular fact. We were studying, under Père Porée, the second book of Homer's Iliad; that second book, printed separately, was the only copy of the poet which we had. Père Porée, in making us compose Greek verses, gave us, as a theme, in Latin prose, a passage taken from the fourth book of the Iliad. I dreamed at night of the Greek verses I had to make; I thought I had done them, and kept repeating in my memory the verses I had just composed. I wrote down, on waking, the four first verses of my composition, having entirely forgotten the others. My composition finished, I gave it to Père Porée, who was much astonished to find that the four first verses were entirely from Homer. He thought at first that I had copied them, but he was fully convinced that I had no knowledge of the fourth book of the Iliad. Cardinal de Polignac, who had no aversion to the marvellous,

told me that the same thing had happened to him, and in a still more surprising manner. Philosophers have not examined with sufficient seriousness the functions of the soul during sleep.

I finished my rhetoric with a brilliant stroke: I declaimed in the grand refectory, in presence of the most learned Jesuits, a Latin essay in which I tried to prove that eloquence was above philosophy. The speech had great success, and caused a sort of schism between the rhetoricians and the philosophers. They answered my discourse. I asked to reply; but the director, fearing a ferment from the argument, condemned me to silence. This quarrel ended in fisticuffs given and received; the philosophers were the strongest, but not the most numerous. I left college after this fine exploit, with a lively gratitude in my heart for the education I had received from the Jesuits. This feeling has never been effaced. I shall have occasion hereafter to say what I think of that Company, which to-day is making so much noise in Europe.

I shall finish this subject with a few reflections. Why employ ten whole years in teaching, very imperfectly, the Latin language to children? At a more advanced age they would know more Latin at the end of six months than they learn at school after many years. Why should children who are not in the same condition of life, nor destined to the same employments be subjected to the same education? Would it not be better to teach arithmetic to the son of a merchant rather than show him how to make Greek and Latin verses? I should like to see each one brought up according to his position and in relation to the employments he must one day fulfil in society. I see only three points of education which ought to be common to all men: religion, by which alone they can be saved; the study of laws, by

which to defend their own well-being and that of others; and lastly, medicine, through which they may hope to preserve their health. Such are, it seems to me, the most essential objects of education, but they are often the most ignored.

I value the study of ancient languages; they give the key to all the treasures of antiquity; but that study is not as useful to all men as would be the study of living languages. Every calling, every profession seems to me to require its appropriate system of education, special and relative.

In 1731 I entered the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice to study philosophy and theology. The seminary of Saint-Sulpice and the college of Louis-le-Grand were considered, at the time of which I speak, as the two most celebrated schools; the highest *noblesse* were educated there. That is a great advantage. It resulted, for me, in being connected with all that was greatest in the kingdom; such ties of youth are never forgotten and are easily renewed. We love to recall our early years; and perhaps, too, we love always what we loved first in the age of candour and sincerity.

I found at Saint-Sulpice a tone and manners wholly different from those of the Jesuits; the latter company of priests, dependent on a general-superior, affect the greatest simplicity and a tone of charity which is not always accompanied by much openness of heart. My nature, at all times decided, has never been inflexible; I have known how to adapt myself to all usages and all tones, while preserving my own way of thinking, which has never been the common way. I was liked at the seminary, as I had been at school, for my frankness, truthfulness, and gaiety.

My morals had always been pure and my conduct regular, but after a retreat which I made at the seminary I was

seized by an extraordinary sense of devotion, which increased day by day for a year. This fervour, I must allow, owed a portion of its heat to that of my age and the vivacity of my passions; my devotion was very ambitious; it disdained all ordinary practices to fasten on whatever was most sublime and most austere in the lives of the saints. My long night-watches, my prayers, my fastings, the perpetual struggle of my mind heated my blood in a manner very dangerous for my health. I came near falling into the pious delirium of certain mystics; I touched very closely upon ecstasies and visions; I felt about the region of my heart when in prayer a heat that was almost unbearable. I took this inward fire for that of divine love; I hoped that some day I might die consumed by it, and that my heart would be found reduced to ashes. The vivacity of my imagination, the emptiness of my heart, which needed to love, had much to do with these pious excesses. My austerities were very great. I do not advise the practice to young men. Flagellation, of which much use is made in the communities, seems to me a practice both indecent and equivocal. It is at least doubtful if that austerity is more fitted to repress than to arouse the passions.

I was in the third heaven when a word, a single speech of my director, who was a man of intelligence, flung me from this high sphere and caused me to follow a system of devotion more simple and more reasonable. He had advised me to write down my resolutions and give him the paper to examine. My fruitful examination, instead of filling a few sheets, brought forth a volume. M. de la Fosse (that was the name of my director) kept the manuscript two weeks, and when, at the end of that time, I went to fetch it and hear his opinion, he coldly gave me back my folio, saying: "There are four faults in French on the first page." Those words chilled

me to excess; which proves that we should be careful what we say to young men gifted with eager minds, able to gather ideas rapidly and make comparisons.

I was at Saint-Sulpice, as I had been at school, an example of punctual obedience to rules. I also distinguished myself in my studies of philosophy and theology; it was I who kept the class in the absence or illness of the master. This species of superiority was not acquired by hard work; a ready perception took the place of industry. At first I worked well to equal or surpass my comrades; but I stopped as soon as I had done so. I had, therefore, many hours to fill, and I employed them in studying belles-lettres. This study soon acquired me the reputation of a wit, and that reputation was very fatal to me; it turned against me the old directors of the seminary, to whom the study of literature seemed too worldly. The frankness with which I expressed myself on the limited education of Saint-Sulpice, and on the too minute practices which were there in usage, made them tax me with an independent and dangerous spirit.

Père Couturier, the Superior, had too much intelligence, and was too well versed in the ways of the world and of men, to judge me so severely; but as it was he who presided over the choice of bishops, through the confidence Cardinal de Fleury placed in his discernment, he may have thought that if I were put into the Church I should have less docility than men of narrower minds less cultivated. The cardinal was old; the Abbé Couturier wanted to keep his credit and his influence with him. He always gave the abbeys and bishoprics to persons who were irreproachable as to morals. So far all was well; but in choosing mediocre minds to fill the chief places in the Church, he did bad service to the episcopate, and did not fulfil his object; for fools are, to say the least, as ungrateful as men of intelligence; and they are not

more docile, because obstinacy and pride usually prefer to put themselves in narrow minds.

However that may be, the Abbé Couturier, while showing me every mark of esteem and friendliness, allowed me to be injured in the cardinal's mind. He knew that persons had done me ill-turns, and he seemed to fear them. He advised me, in order to avert the storm, to make a journey to my family, promising to receive me in the seminary on my return. I felt the snare, but I was powerless to avoid it. Nevertheless, I took precautions so prudent and adroit that I still wonder how at that early age my mind was so mature and reflective. I yielded, therefore, of necessity, to the advice of the Abbé Couturier, who wrote the most beautiful letters to my father and bishop. I bound him also by certain authentic words in my favour which I made him say to persons of importance in the city and at Court; and having taken these precautions, I prepared for my journey to Languedoc, which was to last, and did in fact last, only three months.

A few reflections here present themselves which I must not forget. The Seminary of Saint-Sulpice has been, is, and will be for a long time, the nursery of bishops; but the education formerly given there was suitable at most to form vicars and rectors. The love and practice of small things are in great credit there; but a species of horror for great ones is inspired. The superiors accustom young men to dissimulation by that which they use towards them. If you have committed a fault you are warned of it in equivocal words, to which the heedlessness of youth pays little attention; but they punish so severely the slightest wrong-doing that it may be said there is no proportion between the punishment and fault. A chicken eaten secretly is a cause for expulsion. But what is worse is that when dismissed from the seminary you are certain of having the Sulpicians for enemies. They

think to justify their prejudice by perpetually doing you ill-services. How is it possible they can imagine it wise to be political with youth, or that any good can arise from the art of narrowing the mind and compressing the heart? I have always observed that false natures succeed better in their houses than open and sincere hearts.

It must be said, however, to the praise of seminaries, that they bring up young priests to great purity of morals; and I hear it said that the Abbé Couturier has now put a stop to much pettiness and mummery. But to make the seminary a true nursery for grand-vicars and bishops, there must reign a higher tone, more frankness, and a truer spirit of government; eloquence should be cultivated, a talent so necessary to bishops and men in office; above all, instead of pupils passing ten years in the subtile but sterile study of scholasticism, they should become more learned in the knowledge of Holy Scripture, the canons, and ecclesiastical history. The doctrine taught at Saint-Sulpice is fairly correct; it takes a middle course between the school of the Jesuits and that of Saint-Thomas. It is a pity that Jansenism has rendered the seminary of Saint-Magloire suspected, for the education there is much higher than that at Saint-Sulpice, and it was a good school to form proper subjects for the episcopate.

I had hardly left the seminary before the temptation to go to the theatre assailed me, and I succumbed to it. The Comédie Française affected my heart, the Opera seduced my senses. From that moment there was kindled within me so ardent a passion for the stage that the greatest sacrifice I have made in my life has been to renounce it. This frequenting of theatres produced in me a species of revolution of ideas and feelings, from which I conclude that it is dangerous for young men. I even think that the Opera ought not to be permitted at any age.

I arrived in Languedoc in the month of December, 1734, and found a mission established in my father's house, which sustained for a time the already tottering edifice of my devotion. Intercourse with women was beginning to seem to me agreeable; my vanity was flattered by the praises they gave to my intelligence and my face. But the reflection that I was to return to Saint-Sulpice put a bridle on my heart, all ready to escape me. I passed three months in the battle of innocence with passions.

One night when my imagination, more heated than usual, kept me awake, I went out to walk on a terrace which overlooked a vegetable garden. The moonlight was very beautiful, and the night was still. The light of the moon which played among the trees seemed to form a thousand varied figures. I thought to myself that here was the origin of many of the so-called apparitions. My imagination, recalling to me the stories of my childhood, began to glow; I cast my eyes into the garden and thought I saw distinctly a figure, very pale, of natural height, leaning against a tree, the hands crossed on its breast, and the whole form covered from head to foot with a white veil. Fear seized me, in spite of the reasoning I made to prevent it. In vain I told myself that if it was a spirit it would not be visible; that if it was a body I had nothing to fear, because of the distance at which we were from each other; strong and vigorous as I was, all these reasons did not prevent me from being bathed in sweat, or my hair from standing on end. I forced myself, however, to examine the figure attentively; the more I looked at it, the more distinct the details became; it even became taller to the eye, which I attributed, justly, to the excited state of my imagination. I asked the phantom several times in a loud voice what it was, and what it was doing there. Its silence was obstinate and alarming. My knees trembled

under me, but I resolved to know the truth or perish. I went back to my room for a gun, feeling that the phantom was behind me. I returned to the terrace with my weapon; which gave me confidence, for I found the figure smaller and standing at the same place where it was when I began to be afraid. I called to it again several times and threatened to fire upon it. No answer. Then, leaning the muzzle of my gun on the balustrade, because my hand trembled, I aimed carefully at the phantom and fired my shot, which struck full upon the tree against which the spectre leaned. Its position did not change. Then, seized by a sort of fury mingled with fear, and resolved to push the adventure to an end, I crossed the whole château in the darkness, ran down into the garden, saw the apparent spirit, and marched at it with my hair on end and all my muscles strained. I was only four steps from it when I saw it very distinctly; I sprang upon it and clasped, very closely between my arms, — the tree. From that moment the illusion dispersed, and I saw no more of the phantom. My senses calmed themselves, and I searched tranquilly for the cause of my error. I saw that the tree was peeled of its bark and rotten at the core; that the moonlight striking into it caused the whiteness to which my imagination had added all the rest. There was in this adventure as much courage as cowardice. If I had not fathomed it I should all my life have believed in the silly tales of nurses.

On my return to Paris in 1735, the Abbé Couturier received me with open arms, but he told me that I could not have a room in the seminary for a week. He put me off in this way, from week to week, for three months. This conduct did not surprise me, I had foreseen it; but it afflicted my family. My father's friends in Paris, who did not suspect the sincerity of the Sulpicians, thought it was I who

had a repugnance to shut myself up in the seminary. The matter had to be cleared up. The Abbé Couturier assured me that I was master of re-entering Saint-Sulpice, that he had given his word for it, but that all the other superiors were prejudiced against me; therefore my stay at the seminary would be more injurious to me than useful. I yielded to necessity, and begged the Abbé Couturier to write to my family and get them to adopt the plan which he advised. This was to enter the college of Bourgogne with several of my comrades of the seminary; the Archbishop of Lyon, Montazet, was one of them. This plan was followed, but I had experienced for six months such treachery, such falseness, that I took a horror of what in society is commonly called *mitraille*.

Meanwhile my fate became clearer at Court. Cardinal de Fleury declared to the Maréchal de la Fare, who commanded in Languedoc at that time, that he had been on the point of giving me a considerable abbey, but that now, so long as he lived, I should have nothing; so that luckily for me, I was young and he was old. He spoke with the same harshness to the Bishop of Viviers (Villeneuve). These gentlemen sent these curt, decisive answers without any explanation to my father. He was grieved to the heart. He wrote to me with indignation, and left me without support for two years. My relations and friends in Paris shut their doors and turned their backs to me. Imagine the situation of a young man of nineteen, without means, without advice, left to himself in a city like Paris. No one endures disgrace at that age. If I had had vices they would have been developed under such critical circumstances. I armed myself with courage; I was able to choose a course, and to profit by the lesson of adversity, which is a good teacher.

My misfortune lasted long; the cardinal did not die till 1743, but my fate did not change till 1751. Reduced to the resources of my own soul, I made my plan; and this plan was an honourable one: I vowed myself to the most scrupulous integrity, to patience, and to courage. I looked to Letters as a resource and as an amusement; I renounced the studies at the Sorbonne, my means not allowing me to follow them.

I sought for friends in the great world, and I found them; the reputation for intelligence which I had already acquired opened the door to me. A rather brilliant imagination, a sustained gaiety, the look and the charm of health, a noble way of thinking, a loftiness of soul without assumption, an independence which had the air only of liberty, productions that were merely easy and agreeable, but, above all, discretion, secrecy, and a spirit of conciliation and gentleness, were the qualities which admitted me into good society, and soon made me sought there.

From that moment, I put a fixed intention into my whole conduct. I made a methodical system of the life I would lead, frivolous as it seems to be, and I foresaw that the plan would be very useful to me. I resolved to study men of all classes and all orders, and to instruct myself in knowledge of the human heart while amusing myself. I comprehended that this study of the world would render me capable of great employments should circumstances call me to them; but at any rate I could hardly, living in good company and making myself considered there, fail to find a way to obtain some benefices on which I could live with decency.

As soon as I ceased to lead the ecclesiastical life I renounced the idea of taking the vows of that profession. The honour and constancy with which I held to this intention very nearly ruined me under the ministry of the Bishop

of Mirepoix. One need not be surprised if fortune was long in smiling upon me, and if she made me feel her rigour and her caprices; I often sacrificed her to friendship and to honour, but I never sacrificed anything to her. Nevertheless, my existence never caused me anxiety. Many witnesses still living, who were sometimes alarmed about my future, can certify that I was convinced I should be a man of importance by the time I was forty. The principal quality of my mind has been to see clear and see far.

My misfortune had some relief. I bore it with gaiety and courage on entering society; it made me interesting. Moreover, without violating the rules of prudence or neglecting decorum and respect, I did not restrain myself in speaking of Cardinal de Fleury. He was not without enemies; all prime-ministers have them. Such men sought me; and I was admitted very early into the intrigues of that day. I was secret, though frank; that quality made them forget my youth. I thus learned very early to know the Court, and as reflection has always been the distinctive attribute of my mind, I made great profit of the many anecdotes that were confided to me.

At twenty years of age I was admitted into the society of the Torcys, the Polignacs, the d'Aguesseaus, the Bolingbrokes. At the same time I was dining with Fontenelle, Montesquieu, Mairan, Maupertuis, Crébillon. My talk was not foreign to that of men so different. Reading furnished me with enough to pay my contingent in many ways; the ideas of others germinated readily in my head and gave birth to more. No one ever seized more quickly the peculiarities of each man and each social circle. It cost me nothing to take the tone of others, without, however, losing my own. This facility of manners and mind made me acceptable in society; I became what they call in the world a *coqueluche*

[reigning fancy]. People had to take time by the forelock to get me to supper. I was the fashion, without these successes giving me inward vanity or an air of self-conceit.

Women did not spoil me more than men did. I found among them much cordiality and very favourable prepossessions. Here would be the place for the history of my errors, but the picture would be perhaps more dangerous than useful. I ought to warn those who will read these Memoirs of the danger of giving way to the sensibility of their hearts. Happy they who have never felt the action of the soul upon the senses and the senses upon the soul. It is very difficult to be young and to be virtuous. All that I can say is that in my youth I had many reproaches to make to myself as a Christian, but none as a man of honour. I have always fled bad company and had a horror of debauchery.

Society saw me poor and gay under misfortune, seeking friends and disdaining patrons, without fortune but taking no means to obtain it. They thought me the happiest man in the world, and attributed to temperament what was due to courage. I was born sensitive to excess. My situation humiliated me; I tasted all the bitterness of it, but I knew well that a sad face does not interest long and soon wearies others. I had, therefore, the strength to keep my griefs to myself, and to let nothing show to the eyes of others but my imagination and gaiety.

In 1733 Gresset's first works appeared: "Vert-Vert," and especially "La Chartreuse," had the greatest success. I felt more than others the merit of those works, but I did not give way to an enthusiasm that seemed to me excessive. People said to me, "Do better." I answered that as good might be done in the same style; and I wrote as he did, joking at myself, the "Epistle on Laziness," of which many

copies were handed about; it was even printed without my taking part in the matter. It was believed to be by Gresset. I heard people of taste, who did not know I was the author, say that the "Epistle" was in the best style, and resembled the good works of the "Temple." This first success gave me the idea in 1736 of the "Epistle to my Penates," which was at first attributed to Gresset and had great vogue. This Epistle was also printed without my knowledge, and in a furtive manner. The veil which covered me was now torn aside and my name went from lip to lip; it even ceased to be unknown in foreign countries; so true is it that a few happy verses give celebrity more rapidly than a purely useful work.

It was thus that the talent I had for poesy from my cradle awoke in me once more and made me known to the public. I knew that the king did not like poems, and that poets have always been rather generally regarded as frivolous and dangerous persons. But I was unhappy, I needed distractions; besides which, I lived in an age when wit was much enjoyed; so I chose the most agreeable course. It cost me little pains to succeed; to me it was a play, not a labour. At the bottom of my heart I thought but little of my productions; but I knew they were rapidly establishing the reputation of my intellect; that this reputation would be useful to me; that by abandoning poetry later I should escape the inconveniences attached to it, while the celebrity would remain to me. I was not mistaken in my opinion.

The Bishop of Luçon (Bussy-Rabutin), who had been the friend of my father and mother, and was called in society the "God of good company," sought me out and took a friendship for me. He wanted to reconcile me with Saint-Sulpice. I gave him full powers; but with all his cleverness he failed in his negotiation, just as I had predicted to

him. Convinced that I could obtain nothing from Cardinal de Fleury, he brought me back, nevertheless, into my father's good graces; he obtained from the Archbishop of Paris (Vintimille) the promise of a canonry in Notre-Dame. The day that we were to go together to Conflans, to consummate this affair, he died of an indigestion. Accidents of the same kind have often deprived me of establishments which seemed quite certain.

I owe my fortune to the Bishop of Luçon, through a remark of his which made the deepest impression on my mind. "So long as you are young," he said, "you can easily bear the situation in which you are. You are agreeable, you will be sought; pleasure and self-love will stand you in place of all else; but remember that there is nothing in Paris so melancholy, or more humiliating than the state of an old abbé who has no means." That exhortation never left my head; it roused me often from my indolence, and it did much, about my thirty-fifth year towards making me choose a course.

Something essential would be lacking to the history of my youth if I neglected to describe the manners, morals, and spirit of the times in which I lived. Neither will those who come after me be sorry to find here the portraits of some of the principal personages who figured on the stage of the world and with whom I have been, from the time of my entrance into society, on terms of some intimacy.

II.

1735–1744.—Manners and Morals of the Age. — Cardinal de Fleury. — Cardinal de Polignac. — My Journey to Auvergne and Languedoc in 1739. — Return to Paris in 1741. — The Bishop of Mirepoix. — My Entrance to the French Academy in 1744. — Men of Letters. — Women. — The Great Seigneurs.

THE Court and capital decide the national manners and morals, as they do the fashions. I shall therefore speak here of none but those which reigned in my day at Paris and at Versailles.

Madame de Maintenon had made the Court of Louis XIV. very devout, or, to speak more truly, very hypocritical; but the Regency raised the mask that hid the vices. The Duc d'Orléans, to whom were attributed great crimes, did not believe in integrity, though a man of honour himself. Although so enlightened a prince, he did not sufficiently feel how important it was, even politically, to respect and cause to be respected religion. The king had one day signed the orders for the benefices of which the Regent had the bestowal. The latter, as he took his chocolate, announced the news to those about him saying: "The Jansenists will be satisfied with me this time, for I have given everything to grace [favour], and nothing to merit." M. Massillon, Bishop of Clermont, told me that, complaining one day to the Regent of the rascalities of a man whom the prince had sent him in order that they might work together on the affairs of the clergy, the Regent interrupted the recital of the man's knavery by saying to Cardinal Dubois, who was present, "Abbé, we must

allow he is a great rascal." M. Massillon thought to himself, "Good! there's one unmasked and ruined:" but the Regent added, "Yes, a scoundrel of the first order, but very adroit — Abbé" (to Cardinal Dubois), "we must make an ambassador of him." That was all the satisfaction he gave to the complaints laid before him; and I could add a hundred other instances as striking.

All those who thought daringly of religion had a claim to please the Regent. He allowed a new edition of the "Dictionnaire de Bayle" to be dedicated to him,—a work by which persons became learned very cheaply. Scandalous anecdotes were heard everywhere and scepticism was presented in its strongest light. Even women began to free themselves from prejudices. The spirit of unbelief and free-thinking was abroad in the world. The irreligion of the Regent and his debauches found ready imitators in a nation whose natural character it is to imitate servilely the virtues and vices of its masters: corruption became almost general; people boasted of materialism, deism, pyrrhonism; faith was relegated to the common people, the bourgeoisie, and the religious communities; it was no longer good taste to believe in the Gospel.

The Regent did not do less harm to honour, the national and distinctive virtue of Frenchmen, than he did to religion. It was not that the Duc d'Orléans was not personally full of honour and integrity; but he was so convinced that all men were scoundrels that he treated equally those who were honourable and those who were not; he even gave marked preferences to the latter, and he did so great an outrage to virtue and honour by making Cardinal Dubois prime-minister that it is not to be wondered at if Honour, that sentiment which President Montesquieu regards as the most powerful mainspring of monarchies, was weakened under the Regency.

Women, who have always had the ambition to govern, hoped to lay hold of the reins of empire under a prince who could not do without mistresses, and who had reasons to change them often. But they never had with him any other influence than that of enriching themselves at the cost of the State, and of sometimes appointing to offices men who were incapable of filling them. It may be said that dissolution reached its height during the Regency. The women grew accustomed to unbelief, indecency, love of money, and the notion of governing men in power; nothing was lacking to complete the work of corruption but to push luxury to extremes.

The system of Law, which could have liberated the country from debt had the bank-notes been kept to a reasonable relation to coin, completed the moral ruin through the extravagant fortunes it occasioned. Millions were spent on debauchery and high living with the same ease with which they were acquired. People became accustomed to "marriages for money," a consecrated term of the present day, to the shame of the nobility; for a financial wife can only bring into a home the sentiments which make wealth preferable to all. A warrior nation is very near to bastardy when this way of thinking becomes that of its leaders.

The Duc d'Orléans had much intelligence; he loved and cultivated both science and the arts with success; he made them the fashion, and that fashion still reigned with fury in my early days. I did not find on entering the world the impiety, debauchery, and corruption of morals on or near the throne as they were during the Regency. The weak and troubled ministry of M. le Duc had, to be sure, changed nothing, but that of Cardinal de Fleury brought within narrower limits the outward corruption of morals; the same vices existed, perhaps, but with less brilliancy and protection. It is natu-

ral, therefore, that I should here place some features of the life and character of that minister.

Cardinal de Fleury governed France with all the power of a prime-minister and all the simplicity of a modest favourite. His influence during a long period of years never had any diminution; but he lived too long for his fame, and died just in time not to survive his credit.

He was born at Lodève; his father was a receiver-general and a counciller of State; one of his sisters married a gentleman of Languedoc, from whom are descended the Ducs de Fleury. The cardinal's father gave him an excellent education, and sent him to make his studies in Paris. The Abbé de Fleury allied himself early with people of rank; his person was agreeable, he had wit, and narrated marvellously well, — a quality that was quite common under Louis XIV., but is to-day no longer the fashion; he wrote and spoke excellently. I will mention here in passing that the cardinal had a damask bed at school which was magnificent; but what was very modest and perhaps a little affected was that the all-powerful minister used that bed throughout his life, and died in it.

As soon as he had taken his licentiate's degree he wished to buy an office of chaplain to Madame la Dauphine. I remember a story as to this which he told himself, and it is rather singular that he dared to do so. He related how his family consigned him to a Père of the Oratoire, whose name I forget; this personage had much intelligence, knowledge of the world, and severity. "I don't know why," said the cardinal, "but this good Père suspected me of being ambitious; he was always preaching to me on that point, and forbade me especially to go to Court, on pain of eternal damnation." It became necessary, however, that he should tell his mentor in confidence about the office of chaplain;

the confidence was ill-taken; he was scolded, and received the cold shoulder; but the thing being done it was necessary to appease his director. "Well," said the reverend Père, "you have got the mania for going to Court; I will now give you a piece of advice by which to conduct yourself wisely and safely: stupefy your mind and ossify your heart." The Abbé de Fleury became gallant and intriguing at the Court of Louis XIV. The king, who was beginning to turn to piety, had always detested the gallantry and intrigue of priests; the Abbé de Fleury had become his chaplain; he let him grow old in that office, without ever being willing to appoint him to a bishopric, in spite of the efforts of intriguers, male and female, who caballed for him, and in spite of the recommendation of his own confessor.

M. Hébert, rector of Versailles, was then in great consideration at Court; he was the confessor of Cardinal de Noailles, who at that time enjoyed the whole esteem and, I may say, the entire friendship of the king. The Abbé de Fleury took the course of confessing to M. Hébert, and for two years he was so well able to show his director the noble sides of his soul that the virtuous priest became convinced that Louis XIV. was doing injustice to his character in not confiding to him the care of a diocese. He spoke of it to Cardinal de Noailles, whose candid soul was easily persuaded in favour of the Abbé de Fleury. Matters being thus, the king's confessor made another attempt. Louis XIV. said to him, "You are the dupe of a hypocrite." "Sire," replied Père Tellier, "two men more enlightened than I am, and in whom your Majesty places a just confidence, think as I do." "Who are they?" asked the king. "The Cardinal de Noailles and M. Hébert," replied Tellier. "I will question them," said the king, much surprised at what he heard. The information was favourable to the Abbé de Fleury; the king yielded, in

spite of himself, to such respectable testimony, and the Abbé de Fleury was appointed to the bishopric of Fréjus. But in signing the nomination the king exacted from his confessor that he should render an account to him of the thanks he received for it. "You will see," said the king to the Jesuit, "that all the intriguers at Versailles will come and tell you of their joy and gratitude." He was not mistaken; Louis XIV. knew his Court well.

The Bishop of Fréjus left it with regret to go to his diocese. Though neither liked nor esteemed by his master, he left friends near him who were useful to him and did justice, with reason, to the services he rendered in his diocese and to Provence. He knew how to manage with ability and dignity the interests of his province; he obtained much from the Duc de Savoie, and he deserved the respect and friendship of that prince.

The sorrows which tried the great soul of Louis XIV. at the close of his reign are well known; the grave engulfed the heirs of the throne in succession. One child alone remained in charge of the Duchesse de Ventadour, an old friend of Fleury. The Maréchal de Villeroy, whom the king loved (in spite of lost battles), because he believed the maréchal loved him, and he knew his unalterable integrity, was made governor of the young dauphin. The maréchal and Mme. de Ventadour together obtained, in spite of the king's resistance, the nomination of the Bishop of Fréjus as tutor to the young prince. This first step, which M. de Fréjus owed wholly to his friends, was the solid foundation of the great fortune and boundless power that awaited him in his old age.

M. de Fréjus thought only of pleasing his pupil, and of causing no mistrust to the Regent. When Maréchal de Villeroy was dismissed, he cleverly avoided the storm; and as he was one day paying his court to the Duc d'Orléans

with an air of very decent sadness, the Regent said to him: "Here you are, very much grieved; you have lost your benefactor, your protector, your friend; but, after all, you are master of the dice. Oh, well! I am glad to warn you that if you wander from the straight path I shall have twenty-four hours ahead of you in which to throw you out of the window." — "And you will do right, monseigneur," replied M. de Fréjus, smiling, in the calm and gentle tone that people of a Court employ, even at times when they are most troubled.

I said that Cardinal de Fleury thought only of pleasing his pupil; he knew well that the friendship of children depends on the compliance shown to them, and especially on a little indulgence for their idleness. The child he was educating was king; it was natural that the ambitious but modest prelate should think of establishing a sure foundation of confidence and predilection in the heart of his master. He succeeded, perhaps beyond his hopes. We should praise the cardinal for having implanted in the soul of the king unchangeable principles of religion; but we must also blame him for having alienated from work a prince born with intelligence, memory, accuracy in discernment, and a great desire to do well and to render everyone happy and content. The Bishop of Fréjus inspired the king, unfairly, with an immense distrust of himself, and as great a distrust of others. By this means, the cardinal made sure of the exclusive power of governing public affairs. Great God! that a subject should be guilty of preventing the master, father, judge of a nation from learning the art of governing that nation and employing himself solely in the care of rendering it happy! How repair so unjust and criminal a usurpation of power?

I heard M. de Somméry, the king's sub-governor, say that,

wishing one day to know what took place during the lessons of the tutor with his pupil, he entered the room unexpectedly on some pretext, and found the Bishop of Fréjus sitting on a stool, the king standing by him and putting his tutor's gray hair into curl-papers; that is not exactly the way to instruct a child-king, but it is certainly the way to find the secret of pleasing him.

The Regent, Duc d'Orléans, whose talents and genius cannot be too highly estimated, but whose errors, on the other hand, cannot be too strongly deplored, died in the arms of a mistress. This was a loss. He was attached to the king, no matter what envy may say; and he was more capable than any other of training him in the art of government. After his death the king chose M. le Duc for prime-minister. If integrity and good intentions could have sufficed to fill that important post, M. le Duc might have hoped to succeed in it; but great talents were lacking to him, and often sound advice.

M. de Fréjus was beside the king, playing for the public the rôle of a silent personage, but in reality ruling the mind of his master. M. le Duc did nothing without communicating it to M. de Fréjus; the latter approved of all in the tête-à-tête with the prime-minister, but not so in his tête-à-têtes with the king. Pâris-Duverney, a man of great talent on many lines and of a bold and lofty spirit, advised M. le Duc to ask the Bishop of Fréjus for a written approbation of each project he communicated to him. This precaution might have saved the duke; it was an infallible means of preventing M. de Fréjus from doing him ill-service with the king, or of convicting him of treachery. M. le Duc thought he had no need of that precaution. When anything succeeded it was always M. de Fréjus who had given the advice; whereas, before the public, M. le Duc was laden

with all the failures and iniquities. This odious and dangerous rôle finally became annoying to the prime-minister; he complained to the king of M. de Fréjus, and the latter asked to be allowed to retire from Court, that he might not, he said, be a stone of stumbling. The king, in spite of his own wishes, consented.

The bishop did not exile himself very far; he retired to Issy, two leagues only from Versailles. The king wrote to him every day. M. le Duc's good-nature was much blamed for not profiting by the occasion to send M. de Fréjus to his abbey of Tournus near Châlons. The king regretted his tutor; he grew sad and pensive. The Duc de Mortemart, first gentleman of the Bedchamber, a man of intrepid courage, of a probity that was more than Roman, but singular in character, noticed the king's sadness, divined the cause, made the king acknowledge it, and had the boldness to go to Issy and bring back M. de Fréjus under the very eyes of M. le Duc. From that moment every one expected the dismissal of the latter; he alone would not perceive it; it is true that the king, although so young, could dissimulate like an old man. Louis XIV. at nearly the same age employed the same art with Fouquet. I wish it were not made so great a merit in princes to know how to play a farce with subjects. M. le Duc was arrested one day as he came out from working with the king, and taken to Chantilly. On which, M. de Fréjus, who was soon after made cardinal, had all the power of a prime-minister, without taking either the title or the show of one.

M. le Duc had made the marriage of the queen [Marie Leczinska]; it was quite natural, therefore, that she should feel gratitude for so great a service. This feeling displeased the cardinal; he did not like the queen, and was even accused of doing her ill-turns with the king; but he took

great pains to deceive her by an air of confidence, and sometimes even of gallantry. Persons of the royal household have declared that this old Eminence set a trap for the queen which can never be imagined or explained; but the queen, well advised by her father, the King of Poland, had the prudence not to complain of it.

No ministry was ever longer, more absolute, or less stormy than that of Cardinal de Fleury. He possessed the heart of his master exclusively; he had, besides, one great advantage in disconcerting intrigues: not only had he great experience in that art, but he had seen the birth of all the courtiers, he knew their ties and intimacies from childhood and the strength and weakness of their minds. Jealous of his power, he nevertheless was at one time willing to share the burden of it with M. Chauvelin, whom he had always liked, and who, in truth, had great talents, knew public affairs, managed with adroitness foreign courts, but was never able to take the tone of that of Versailles.

It was said that he showed too much impatience to succeed his benefactor. Becoming Keeper of the Seals, he shared the homage of the Court with the cardinal; he embarked him in the war of 1733, which was very glorious for France and gave to M. Chauvelin a great reputation. People are always a little jealous of their heirs; the cardinal became so of this work of his hands, and as he could not do without a Keeper of the Seals while the war lasted, he hastened to make the Peace of Vienna. M. Chauvelin was arrested, sent first to his Château of Grosbois, and then to Bourges. It was said, perhaps wrongfully, that the Marquis de Martignac, who had passed as the satellite of the Keeper of the Seals, denied the intimacy on one occasion after his dismissal. The Duchesse d'Aumont, who was indignant, interrupted him saying, "And the cock crew," which made

everybody laugh. The saying was good, and is worthy of being preserved.

After the cardinal's death, Chauvelin's friends advised him to write to the king and send his Majesty a memorial, in which the cardinal was harshly mentioned. The king saw in this risky step ingratitude and a want of respect to himself. M. Chauvelin was relegated to Issoire; his exile lasted many years.

The Peace of Vienna was the crown of the cardinal's glory. If, after giving Lorraine to France, weakening the House of Austria, and establishing a branch of that of France in Italy, he had had the courage to abdicate as prime-minister, he would have ranked among the greatest ministers; he would have kept all his credit, all his influence even, and his memory would have been held in respect by Europe. But he trusted to his *immortality;* his health was excellent; and by means of a little rouge put into water, with which he rubbed his face, and false teeth, he made his enemies despair and deluded himself. Moreover, great public matters had never kept him from sleeping; his head was cool and his stomach warm. One day when he was eating all sorts of unwholesome things, some one said to him that he risked making himself ill. "Pooh!" he replied, "I have a stomach that digests iron." M. de Campo-Florido, Spanish Ambassador, a malicious monkey, hearing the remark said, "I am glad of that, monseigneur; for this afternoon I have things to say to your Eminence which are hard of digestion."

Invulnerable as the cardinal was, he had, nevertheless, a dangerous illness at Fontainebleau, and everybody thought he was dying; they could not believe that at his age he would recover. The Spanish ambassador, whom I have just mentioned, was perpetually in his antechamber watching

for news of his health, about which they were very inquisitive in Spain; every one knew that the queen (Farnese) hated the cardinal. M. de Campo, to make himself sure, was continually asking to see his Eminence; the latter, who liked well enough to make fools of people, gave orders, when his strength was returning, to let the ambassador come in. M. de Campo found him in an arm-chair, looking more like a corpse than a living man; his head was sunk into his chest, and his voice, feeble and broken, seemed to come from the other world. The ambassador, on the testimony of his own eyes, decided that his Eminence had not three days to live; he went away and immediately despatched a courier to Spain with the good news. That done, he returned to the château, and the first person he saw on entering the king's apartments was the cardinal, straight as a cedar, rosy in complexion, finest teeth in the world, on his way to do business with his Majesty; he bowed as he passed the ambassador, and asked him if he had not just despatched a courier to Spain.

After the Peace of Vienna the cardinal enjoyed a consideration that was almost universal; he could flatter himself with having won the confidence of all the Courts, even those that were most inimical to ours. The Emperor Charles VI. treated him as a friend; this prince had his aims; he knew that by flattering the cardinal he could make France guarantee the Pragmatic Sanction [Article 10 of the Treaty of Vienna]. It is a question still to be decided whether this guarantee was, or was not, a great political error; but we are obliged to agree that having so solemnly secured the succession of the House of the States of Austria, France ought never to have invaded them on the death of Charles VI.; and all the more, because, without striking a blow she could have drawn great advantages from that succession. But the Maréchal de Belle-

isle, for whom Madame de Lévis had inspired the cardinal with a great predilection, presented very fine plans, and one may truly say that he bewitched his Eminence by a species of magic and made him undertake, against his principles and against his taste, an enterprise much above his strength, and which his great age would not allow him to see finished. It was then that the limits of the cardinal's capacity were seen; he adopted a great plan and had but little power to execute it; he had the grief to see the treasury exhausted,— he who all his life had sought to replenish it by prudent economy, which it may justly be said he carried to excess.

He saw with bitterness that he would survive his reputation, and perhaps his influence; for the king, who was beginning to take pleasure in the society of women, did not always show his usual deference for the cardinal's advice. He finally died at the seminary of Saint-Sulpice at Issy, January 29, 1743, in his ninetieth year. It has been said that he might have made an excellent minister to some minor sovereign. Without ostentation himself, he set an example of general economy; orderly in his private affairs, he liked order in those of the State. His spirit was wise. Violent methods were not to his taste; and if, on many occasions, he did not uphold the king's authority firmly, he, at any rate, seldom compromised it. His zeal for religion and for the decency of morals was most praiseworthy. Possibly he might have followed a better system of healing disputes; but it can be said that at his death there was no longer any question of Jansenism, the ashes of which have been of late years very unwisely stirred up. Under the ministry of Cardinal de Fleury, the king's Council had more authority, and kept its secrets better; the great bodies in the State were more submissive; the ministers more respected; and France herself more respectable.

We must also praise the cardinal for having thought so late of elevating his family. If he obtained great titles and great places for his nephews, it was not at the expense of the State; these gifts were pure favours, and the men to whom they were given were among the best and most honourable persons in society.

I have said the good; I shall not disguise his errors. The greatest of all, I have already noted; it was that of diminishing in the king any taste that he might have had for work. The prince needed occupation; he had all the qualities necessary for useful labour. The distrust with which Cardinal de Fleury inspired him for his own ideas was unjust and unreasonable.

Cardinal de Fleury preferred men of mediocrity. He carefully set aside all who bore the stamp of superiority. He wished to reign, and he knew his weakness. Economy, which is the basis of all administration of the finances, will prevent their ruin, but is not enough alone to regenerate them. Cardinal de Fleury had none of the views of a great minister, either on commerce, or on the marine, which is the strength of commerce, or on agriculture, or on population, the primary sources of the wealth and strength of States. He courted financiers in order to obtain from them, at need, resources of money, and by this method he made the operations of the government dependent on bankers. It is not the wealth of a few private individuals which ought to sustain a State in a crisis; it is rather the wealth of the State which should protect and save the fortunes of subjects.

And lastly, the cardinal hated men of letters, and gave too little protection to the arts and sciences which made so illustrious the reign of Louis XIV., and brought more money into his kingdom than his wars, often undertaken unadvisedly, took out of it.

One of the first acquaintances which I made on entering society was Cardinal de Polignac, to whom, on the paternal and the maternal side, I have the honour to be related. I owe to the friendship with which he favoured me a tribute of gratitude to his memory; moreover, he well deserves in other ways not to be forgotten.

Cardinal de Polignac was one of those men to whom nothing is needed in order to be great but a little more vigour of character. No one had a nobler air; his person would have been imposing if gentleness had not tempered its majesty. He spoke with grace and eloquence; one did not notice that he spoke at too great length until one was no longer with him. His memory was as correct as it was well-furnished; his knowledge extended over many matters; it might, however, have been desired that the depth of that knowledge had equalled its extent. He played a great part in the world without ever having been fortunate or sufficiently able. He committed imprudences in Poland; he brought back from Gertruydenberg only the fame of having spoken eloquently. One of the plenipotentiaries of the Dutch republic said of him: "It must be acknowledged that the Abbé de Polignac did his humanities well." At Utrecht he showed that he was not well informed on the boundaries of Acadia (which are to-day the cause of our war with England), nor on the importance of the valleys ceded to the king of Sardinia. The Peace of Utrecht does him, nevertheless, great honour. To properly judge of a work we must enter into all the circumstances under which it was done.

In Rome, Cardinal de Polignac acquired a less disputed reputation. Magnificent, loving antiquities, knowing the arts, cordial to artists, he was there in his element. His palace was a species of academy, where more dissertations were made than diplomatic business done. Despatches

Rigaud.

Cardinal de Polignac

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were often sacrificed to the Muses, and the reading of works of intellect delayed the departure of couriers. It may be said that Cardinal de Polignac had all the knowledge that belongs to a statesman, and even the views of one, but not the character; his soul was too soft and too indolent.

No one ever had as much coquetry of the mind as he; he wanted to please and to be liked. This weakness led him into the commission of many faults. It dragged him into the miserable intrigues of the Duchesse du Maine, which caused him to be exiled for the second time. If the cardinal had died in Rome, or in his archbishopric, he would have left behind him a great reputation; but he returned to Paris with the idea of playing the grand personage by the mere weight of his name, his talents, and his services. Honest man and citizen, he disdained intrigues, and refused himself to the Jansenist party which opened its arms to him. Cardinal de Fleury ceased to fear him, and even dared to turn him into ridicule; many others, following this example, were as bold: so that this man, so distinguished for his birth, his intellect, and his dignities, was reduced to being the ornament of the academies.

I have said somewhere that he was not averse to the marvellous; I do not mean that his mind was weak, but before deciding that anything was impossible he wished to fathom it in every direction, and know all that could be said about it, both for and against. He was relating one day the legend of Saint-Denis, and how that saint had carried his head in his hands for a distance of several leagues. A clever woman, impatient with the tale, said very wittily: "The number of leagues has nothing to do with it, monseigneur; *c'est le premier pas qui coûte.*"

No one employed better than he, nor for a longer time, the right of speech. Some one asked Voltaire one day: "Where are you going so early?" "I am going," he replied, "to listen

to a monologue by Cardinal de Polignac." M. de Mairan, referring to the same thing, wanted a portrait made of the cardinal in which he should be represented seated comfortably in an arm-chair, his hand stretched forth a little, in the attitude of a man who is talking, and around him an infinitude of ears, women's little ears, philosophers' big ears, the ears of theologians, archæologists, artists; beneath which should be inscribed the words: "The Paradise of Polignac."

In spite of these jests, it may be said that M. de Polignac was a rare man, who did honour to his epoch. The Latin poem he left behind him [*Anti-Lucretius, sive de Deo et natura; libri novem*] is more esteemed by foreigners than by Frenchmen. Latin poetry has declined in France, the philosophy of Descartes still more so; but this work alone would have won for Cardinal de Polignac a distinguished place in men's esteem, had he had no other claim to it.

I owe to the confidence of this celebrated man, and to the pleasure he took in instructing me, a great quantity of detailed knowledge which is not to be found in books. From the time I was twenty I seldom passed a day without conversing with Cardinal de Polignac for an hour or more; he was a universal dictionary which I went to consult. He put me into communication with his oldest friends; M. de Torcy was one of them. This minister is known for his Memoirs, which are written with much nobleness, simplicity, and truth; but the virtues of M. de Torcy were much above his talents. It was also through Cardinal de Polignac that I made acquaintance with Chancellor d'Aguesseau, that great and virtuous magistrate, who had no other defect than that of being sometimes undecided by force of having many ideas.

It will be supposed, of course, that Cardinal de Polignac presented me to the Duchesse du Maine, by whom he had allowed himself to be loved all his life. This princess had

great intelligence; she had the art of preserving around her the air of a Court, and of gathering at Sceaux the sciences, the arts, and at the same time all that there was of sublime and frivolous, best and worst company in Paris. Mme. de Staël de Launay, whose Memoirs we have, had fixed the favour of this fickle princess by force of merit. The Duchesse du Maine always passed rapidly from serious things to trifles, from the Academy of Sciences to a puppet-show. The Countess of Sandwich (who had the most masculine face and mind that I have ever known in any woman) said of Mme. du Maine, with whom she passed her life: "If the duchess had the sceptre of the world, she would find the way to make a rattle of it." The definition was correct.

It was in the society of eminent and enlightened persons that I passed my youth; my productions were welcomed there, and thence I drew my first lessons in taste and the usages of social life. I was, besides, in close intimacy with Fontenelle, President Montesquieu, and the other *beaux esprits* of the period. The amateurs of art were all acquaintances of mine. Foreigners of distinction did not escape me. My plan was to know all Europe without leaving Paris; to fathom the manners and morals of all societies and States; in a word, to study men rather than books. This study has since been very useful to me.

Père Tournemine, the Jesuit, whom I have already mentioned, proposed to Cardinal de Polignac to give me his Latin poem of "Anti-Lucretius" to translate into French verse. The cardinal told me I could do better; that he himself had only attacked the materialists, but that in a work of the same character I could fight with the sceptics. My spirit was fired by this advice, and I began at once my poem called "Religion;" I composed the first four cantos in 1737 with surprising facility. I carried weekly to the cardinal what I

wrote, and read it before the most distinguished men of letters; so it is seen that all the works of my youth were not frivolous.

Cardinal de Polignac died November, 1741, at the age of eighty-one, with much religion, courage, and presence of mind. I have a fancy to add to this account of him certain verses of the Duchesse du Maine, which describe her *bon ami* marvellously well: —

"De son divin Système
Polignac pénétré,
Va voir l'Être suprême
Qu'il nous a démontré.
Il se met en chemin;
Mais bientôt tout l'arrête
Bois, bergers, et moutons, don, don;
Partout il s'arrêta, la, la;
Bref, il manqua la fête."

The famous Ninon l'Enclos, to whom they presented him, as the fashion was, when twelve years old, said, after asking him many questions: "Some day he will have more wit than he needs; and that is a great pity."

The agreeable life that I led in the world had procured me many friends, and a rather great celebrity; but fortune, which I neglected, never ceased to ill-treat me. I was appointed in 1739 to a canonry at Brioude in Auvergne; it was a suitable place for a gentleman, but the revenue was very insufficient. I left Paris to take possession of my county — that is how they call the canonries of Brioude. The church of Saint-Étienne is one of the most ancient of the Gauls; its chapter dates back to the reign of Clovis the Second; it is necessary for a candidate to produce proof of four generations of nobility, on the side of both father and mother.

I recovered in Auvergne from the prejudice that a man can live nowhere but in Paris; I found in that province

men of solid minds, and sometimes agreeable men. I lived there a year, and made the flattering conquest of M. Massillon, Bishop of Clermont. That excellent man passed part of the year at the country-house of Beauregard, so-called on account of the beauty and singularity of its situation. It was in this retreat that M. Massillon retouched and arranged the admirable sermons which have appeared since his death. I have never known a man who, with the simplest exterior, inspired more easily veneration and love. His mind developed only by degrees; but once roused, it took on the most brilliant yet the most natural colours. Adored in his diocese, he had banished from it all disputes about religion, though Clermont was one of the cradles of Jansenism. One day when he was showing his garden at Beauregard to a foreigner, and the foreigner was exclaiming at the beauty and richness of the view, he said: "Come into this path and I will show you something more remarkable than all that." The path was dark, and the foreigner expressed his surprise at seeing nothing remarkable. "What!" said M. Massillon, "don't you see that Jesuit and that Father from the Oratoire playing ball together? That is what I have brought them to."

I showed M. Massillon the first four cantos of my poem against sceptics; he exhorted me to extend the work and finish it. He wanted to attach me to the Church, to give me Orders, and make me his grand-vicar, saying: "I have only my reputation, but there is some regard still paid to that at Versailles; you will be sooner a bishop by working under my eyes than if you attach yourself to some great seigneur." I made him understand, with great detail, the motives of religion and honesty which forbade me to take that course. He approved of my scruples, and liked and esteemed me the more for them.

But he advised me to attach myself to Foreign Affairs, and told me that I should have much success in the career of negotiation. He made me promise, moreover, that on my return to Paris I would have an explanation with Cardinal de Fleury. "You know how to speak," he said; "your frankness and candour create an interest in you; the harshest men do not hold out against that seduction; perhaps you will bring the cardinal back to you; at any rate, you lose nothing by attempting it." I promised to follow his advice, and did so in 1743, with what result will be seen presently.

From Auvergne I went to Languedoc, where I spent three months with my father. I did not think from the good health in which I found him that I should lose him in two years. I composed in his house, without any assistance from books, the six last cantos of my poem on "Religion."[1] It would hardly be believed with what ease I wrote in those days. The canto of "Pyrrhonism," which contains nearly eight hundred lines, was begun and ended in twenty-four hours without any interval; and I ought to say that such rapid work did not need as much correction as might be supposed. That poem finished, I returned to Paris, with my portfolio full, but with very little money; which did not cause me any anxiety; at the bottom of my soul I always found hope, and a species of certainty to make my way to fortune.

I did not find Paris cold to me on my return from Languedoc. My ideas had ripened in retirement; my spirit was more manly, and my imagination had lost nothing; brilliant health, and twenty-five years of age are always well-

[1] The following are the titles of the ten cantos: 1. Introduction. 2. Idolatry. 3. Atheism. 4. Materialism of Epicurus. 5. Spinozaism. 6. Deism. 7. Pyrrhonism. 8. Heresy. 9. Corruption of mind and morals. 10. The Triumph of Religion.

received in the great world. The fashion of mind and intelligence had not passed; we may even say the malady was epidemic. My poem of "Religion" excited much curiosity; men of letters and men of society were equally desirous of hearing it, and it was good style to have listened to it.

One circumstance, which I shall here relate, aided my celebrity. I remembered the promise I had made to the Bishop of Clermont and I resolved to have an explanation with Cardinal de Fleury. Barjac, that famous valet-de-chambre to whom nearly the whole Court cringed, but who never forgot himself, arranged an interview for me with his master. He announced me to his Eminence, whom I can see now, leaning upon a little table with a large hat on his head. As he heard me named he bowed and said, shaking his head a little, "Ah! ah!"

I went forward with a modest but confident manner, and said: "Monseigneur, as long as I was a mere child I respected the prejudices of your Eminence, but to-day I am of an age to endeavour to remove them; honour even makes it a duty to do so. I have come to ask your Eminence how it was that I, so young, could have been so undeserving as to displease the king; of what am I accused? Have I failed in religion, in my duty as a subject, in honesty — ?"

"Monsieur," interrupted the cardinal, "you are taking the matter in a very grave way: you are not blamed for anything that affects principles. But you have no vocation."

"You reassure me," I replied. "God alone reads the heart; and since your Excellency has nothing essential against me, I venture to claim the kindness which you promised to my father; if I am guilty of none but the follies of youth, I could tell you more of those than you know, and I do not believe they would injure me in your

mind, for every man has been young; therefore I entreat your Eminence to come to my assistance — "

I saw, toward the end of my harangue that the cardinal's face darkened, and here he interrupted me with temper and said in a harsh tone, "Oh! monsieur, as long as I live you shall never have a benefice."

"Well, then, monseigneur, I will wait," I replied, making him a low bow.

I perceived as I withdrew that the cardinal thought the speech witty; and it was he who divulged it. All the good company of the Court and city applauded it. They thought it simple, noble, courageous, and decent. It wounded an old man and disarmed him at the same time. In short, the speech had a great vogue; every one was curious to see a young man who had dared to give a rap to an all-powerful minister. That speech, which became celebrated, seemed to square so well with the events of my life that I took it for my motto, and I say to-day, as in 1742, "I will wait."

The cardinal did not make me wait long; he died in 1743. The king, who was, they said, very weary of him, seemed to regret him; but he soon consoled himself and never mentioned his name for many years. It is only lately that he has spoken of him, when occasion offers, without praise or blame.

As for me, I gained nothing by the cardinal's death. His successor in the ministry of Church Affairs, Boyer, Bishop of Mirepoix, put such conditions to the favours I asked that my way of thinking would not allow me to accept them.

This bishop received the portfolio of benefices immediately after the death of Cardinal de Fleury, and it may be said that he knew how to make himself master of his department, and that no one had power or any real influence over his

mind. His intentions were upright, but his discernment was not brilliant. He did not like the nobles, and preferred to be deceived by obscure persons. He conducted the affairs of religion with more zeal than prudence. The ministry of Cardinal de Fleury had almost annihilated Jansenism in France. The Convulsionaries had cast great ridicule on the party; the celebrated writers who had defended it were dead; only one suspected bishop was left, and he had one foot in the grave. It was now necessary to simply establish in the Church the grounds of fixed doctrine, to oppose contempt and silence to the vain efforts of an expiring faction, and all would have been ended; the Church and State would have enjoyed a continued tranquillity. The Bishop of Mirepoix, by dint of zeal and harshness, contrived to rekindle the dying embers of Jansenism. He was the cause, or the occasion, of the protection which the parliaments gave to it; in a word, that party recovered its strength. Would it not have been wiser and safer to allow it to die a lingering death?

The Bishop of Mirepoix thought he possessed a very singular talent. He believed he read characters on countenances, and this uncertain science often decided him in making important choices. In other respects the bishop had no knowledge of the world nor of the Court. The King of Spain had charged his ambassador M. de Campo-Florido to ask the king for a benefice for an ecclesiastic who had been a monk, and whom his Catholic Majesty protected. The king sent the ambassador to the Bishop of Mirepoix. M. de Campo went to see the prelate on Ash-Wednesday, and told him his mission, which was very ill-received, and as the ambassador insisted, in the name of the king and the name of his own master, the bishop said angrily, "How can you expect me to give an abbey to a man who has been

a monk?" "Moussiou, memento homo," replied the ambassador, walking away.

M. de Mirepoix had not inherited Cardinal de Fleury's prejudices against me. A Benedictine who had written against the Convulsionaries (and who, by the bye, instead of stamping the pretended miracles as false, adopted the dangerous principle of explaining events that seemed to him supernatural by the power of the devil), this Benedictine, I say, becoming Bishop of Bethlehem, was the oracle of M. de Mirepoix, and had taken such a friendship for me that long before the latter was minister of benefices, he had inspired him with a high idea of my talents and a desire to attach me to the Church. So now the Bishop of Bethlehem introduced me to the Bishop of Mirepoix by a letter, in which, thinking to make my court to the prelate, he spoke advantageously of my poem of "Religion." He knew him ill. M. de Mirepoix received me in relation to that work as if I had written the tales of La Fontaine. I saw with surprise the limits of his intelligence. It was necessary to explain to him that poesy had always been consecrated to religion; that the Psalms, the Song of Songs, the Book of Job were poems; that the fathers of the Church had fought heresy with verses; and finally, that the Church had blessed the use of hymns and canticles. He could not answer my arguments, but he kept his prejudices. To make my peace, we agreed that nothing further should be said about my poem, but that it should not be considered an irremissible crime to have occupied my youth with a defence of religion.

These preliminaries signed, we entered upon the main subject. The Bishop of Mirepoix said to me these very words: "You have great talents; you must consecrate them to the Church, and take the final vows. Monsieur," he added, pressing my hand, "it is in the name of the Church

that I speak to you; sub-deacon, an abbey; priest, two years grand-vicar, then bishop."

"Monseigneur," I replied, "I advise you not to make those offers to every man; you would have them accepted; as for me, I will reflect upon them."

"Monsieur," added the bishop, hastily, "if you do not take Orders, you will have nothing."

"I will reflect," I said, "and let you know my decision; be sure that it will conform to religion and honour."

I reflected that my fortune depended on the course I should now take. All my friends advised me to defer to the opinion of M. de Mirepoix. As for me, I felt an invincible repugnance to make those sacred vows from the double motive of interest and ambition. I informed the bishop of my way of thinking; he approved it, while informing me that I could look for no ecclesiastical favours. Some years later, the king had the kindness to speak to M. de Mirepoix for me about an abbey; the bishop intrenched himself behind the fact that I was not in Orders. I was strongly urged to take them; but I was immovable, preferring an honourable poverty to an opulence ill-obtained.[1] I have always ascribed to that act of honesty and courage, not only the esteem with which the king has honoured me, but even the fortune I have since made.

The king gave way to M. de Mirepoix's resistance, but he gave me a pension of 1,500 francs out of his privy-purse.

[1] The following anecdote I hold from M. Firmin-Didot himself, who told me he had it from the original and from tradition. Bernis, in the days of his great poverty and his dinners with Diderot at six sous a head, was employed as proof-reader by the publishing and printing-house of Didot, great-grandfather of my informant. There he had his lodging and breakfast with the family. One day the head of the house, not seeing him, said; "Is not Bernis coming to breakfast?" "No," said one of the family, "he is busy just now; he is mending his breeches." — SAINTE-BEUVE.

It will be seen under what circumstances and from what motives I finally took Holy Orders, being then ambassador in Venice. As long as the Bishop of Mirepoix lived I neither solicited him nor allowed him to be solicited in my behalf. Pope Benedict XIV. appointed me in 1749 to a benefice in Bretagne [the pope disposing for eight months of the year of all benefices falling vacant in that province during that time]. The Bishop of Mirepoix congratulated me. I said to him, "The pope has raised the interdict you put upon me." That speech made the Court laugh. It was the only revenge I allowed myself against the bishop's harshness. But that harshness was vanquished in the end. On my return from Venice in 1755, I obtained the abbey of Saint-Arnould, and it was M. de Mirepoix who bestowed it, with all the grace in the world. I may call it his swan's-song; he died six weeks after announcing to me that gift of the king. He had never been much esteemed, and was little regretted.

My life up to the year 1744 had been nothing but a series of disappointments, for which the pleasure of being loved and valued was the only compensation. I had just closed to myself the door of benefices; it was absolutely necessary to find another career. I bethought me of entering the French Academy. The Academy was, as the Abbé de la Bletterie wittily said to the dowager Duchesse d'Aiguillon, "the *tabouret* of talent." It was pleasant to enter that Company at my age, and I desired to take my place there more as a man of rank than as a writer. I took, in consequence, the proper steps. All the best company of Paris and Versailles interested themselves for me. Mme. de Tencin put herself at the head of the opposite party. We had to give battle; the combat was long, and victory for a long time was undecided. I shall remark, in passing, that I have always obtained that which I strongly desired; although it is true that fortune has con-

tested her favours, and I was forced to snatch them. The king fell ill at Metz; and my adversaries profited by that event to postpone the election to the Academy.

The king's illness made him know the hearts of his subjects. Never was grief more keen or more universal; it can only be compared to the intoxication of joy which the return of the health of the monarch caused. I shall not relate here all the intrigues at Metz during this illness, and the dismissal of Mme. de Châteauroux and her sister. The Bishop of Soissons was exiled, and so were the Ducs de Châtillon and de La Rochefoucauld. I neither justify nor blame their conduct; we may suppose their motives to have been good, inasmuch as every one does homage to their integrity. I shall only say, in regard to M. de Soissons, that it is sometimes a most unfortunate thing to be forced to tell the truth to princes; and, in regard to the others, that you must never think a king dead until he is really so, and that meantime you should behave as if he were not ill at all.

The king, escaping the grave, went in very severe weather to the conquest of Fribourg; he returned triumphant to Paris, and this prince who, a month earlier, was the idol of all hearts, was received with very faint applause in his capital. The rumour had spread that he intended to take back Mme. de Châteauroux. Nothing more was needed to chill all hearts. The people, corrupt as they are, desire their kings to love their wives; they know, moreover, that mistresses do not diminish taxes.

I must here relate a circumstance which plainly shows the nature of courtiers. M. de Villeneuve, former ambassador to the Porte, had been appointed minister of Foreign Affairs. The king on his return from Fribourg, lodged in the Tuileries; an immense crowd attended his *lever;* I was there; it was impossible to stir. M. de Villeneuve had not

yet seen the king since his appointment; he came to thank him, so it was supposed, for the office confided to him. His external appearance was not imposing; but the vast crowd opened to let him pass, and an air of respect was visible on all faces. He entered the king's presence; in a few moments the news flew about that M. de Villeneuve had told the king that the mediocrity of his talents and the bad state of his health did not permit him to take upon himself so great a burden: it was the act of a wise and virtuous citizen. The king yielded to his entreaty, which was known at once in the antechamber, and when M. de Villeneuve came out no one would make way for a personage before whom ten minutes earlier they had prostrated themselves. The Duc d'Orléans, regent, once said of a man at Court "He is a perfect courtier — without honour and without temper." The definition would have been perfect if he had added, "without shame."

In spite of the intrigues of Mme. de Tencin, I was received at the French Academy, the duties of which place I fulfilled for several years with punctuality and some distinction. I soon became the friend of my colleagues and the benefactor of those who had opposed me. But, content with having made myself a name in letters, I did not wish it to be thought that I confined myself to cultivating them. Too great an assiduity at the sessions of the Academy would have been harmful to the views that I was beginning to have. I avoided therefore the sort of ridicule that people in society would certainly have put upon me, and by this conduct I saved myself from the danger there is from satire to those who live closely with men of letters. M. Piron said a very good thing about my entrance at the Academy: "We are getting the Invalids very young."

Before continuing the history of my life, which will soon

become more interesting, I think I ought to make known the three classes of persons with whom in my youth I chiefly lived: men of letters, women, and great seigneurs.

First, men of letters. The essential and distinctive character of these men is self-love. This is what often makes intercourse with them both fatiguing and dangerous; fatiguing, because we must compel ourselves to praise them constantly, or to hear them praise themselves; dangerous, because the least scratch to their vanity kindles their hatred and excites their vengeance. A woman never pardons a disparagement made upon her face; the man of letters never forgets a want of respect for his mind. Thus I advise men of sense never to quarrel with authors, or else to avoid their intercourse.

I never knew any one but Fontenelle who had all the charms of intellect in society without the inconveniences of the *bel esprit*. This was not because he was devoid of self-love, but because his usage of the world and of philosophy had made that self-love gentler and more sociable. Here are a few traits of M. de Fontenelle which will make known his character and the turn of his mind. He was in favour during the Regency, and carried upon him when he went out a pocket-book full of bank-notes. Some one told him that he risked much at night, there were thieves about, and he ought to take precautions. "What precautions?" he asked. "Pocket-pistols," was the reply. "Pooh!" he said "they would steal those."

Towards the end of his life he went to see a woman who, like himself, was nearly a hundred years old. "Death has forgotten us, monsieur," she said to him. "Hush!" he replied, putting his finger on his lips, "he may hear you."

When I solicited his vote for the Academy he said: "You know how much I like and esteem you, but I have made a

vow to my country never to say a yes or a no." When I returned from Venice he clasped me tightly in his arms and said: "I love you much, and for that reason I wish you may not live to be as old as I am."

President de Montesquieu also had all the appearances of modesty; seeing him so simple you had to search for the great man in him. Voltaire, whom I consider the finest mind [*le plus bel esprit*] of his epoch, has the air of an author only with authors; in society he is a polished courtier, witty and well-informed. Crébillon senior also shows the simplicity of a man of genius, but his mind has nothing but strength and no charm. His son, on the contrary, adds to imagination much fire and gaiety; it is a pity he writes nothing but tales and romances. Piron, Duclos, and Marivaux have much intellect, but Marivaux has given in to false taste, and Piron has turned to singularity. Voltaire, meeting Piron after the first representation of "Semiramis" [Voltaire's tragedy in five acts], asked him if he liked it, saying that he should be much flattered if it received the praise of a man like himself. "Ah!" said Piron, "you wish that I had written it." Duclos, with better intellect than either, did not always avoid the rock of singularity; his soul, which is very honourable, ought to render him dearer to his friends than even his mind. It is a great pity that Gresset has neglected his talents, and that despair of obtaining the first place has made him take to silence. Bernard [Gentil-Bernard], who has always kept his works in his portfolio, writes in the style of Ovid, with a more correct but less flowing pen. I speak here of those men of letters only who were most in society and whom I knew best.

I lived a little with d'Alembert, but much with Mairan and Maupertuis. D'Alembert writes well; Mairan has many ideas, and wisdom of mind; Maupertuis wanted to be

singular, and he has become so more than was necessary; Buffon is a man of merit, who knows how to write and how to conduct himself. [His "Natural History" did not begin to appear till 1749.] As for the Abbé Terrasson [Jean Terrasson, translator of Diodorus Siculus], he was one of the men I liked best to meet; he was naïve in character, eloquent when an argument grew warm, and in the daily current of life the best and most original of men without assuming to be so.

I have said that on my entrance into the world wit was much the fashion; every circle of society had its little illustrious; the academies overflowed into city and Court; men of letters ceased to work in their studies, they became men of gallantry, and all the women thought they had intellects; books were multiplied and soon became frivolous; conversations degenerated into dissertations. To wit and *bel esprit* succeeded the sciences; every woman had her geometrician, as she formerly had her page. To-day politics and theories of government have banished from the great world wit and science. Ambassadors have taken the place of poets and men of science; everything in turn is the fashion in Paris, even vice and virtue.

That which has always most revolted me in the society of men of letters is the spirit of independence they very generally affect towards all spiritual and temporal authority. Most of them like to turn sacred things into ridicule, as if there were merit in attacking what is necessary to and respected by other men. This literary pride and boldness does not exist, however, except in men of letters who have no hopes of fortune; for none are less philosophical than philosophers, and these grumblers at courtiers are base and creeping enough when they do get some entrance at Court. It must be understood that I am speaking generally; for I

have met among men of letters pure, noble, modest souls, submissive to authority.

Before ending these remarks, I wish to say a word of wit and intellect [*esprit*], to which every one pretends and which each man defines as he pleases. I long thought it was sufficient to say and write pretty things to be a man of intellect; but since then I have reflected; I think that one can be agreeable, amusing, original even, without being very wise. A man of intellect, as I now think, is one who enlightens his epoch by useful works, renders men happy by wise laws, renders them better by purifying morals, and by teaching precepts ennobled by eloquence and embellished by imagination. All work which does not fulfil in some superior manner a purpose of physical or moral utility ought not to win for its author the reputation of a man of intellect. In a word, I do not separate intellect from good sense and virtue.

When I entered the great world I found it was thought ridiculous for a husband to love his wife, or for a wife to love her husband; manners and morals in this respect were so general that Pierre de la Chaussée thought himself permitted to attack this subject in a comedy which had much success. Conjugal fidelity was at that time a virtue in the minds of none but the bourgeoisie. This depravity of morals is not so much the fashion at present; society may not be more virtuous, but it is at least more decent.

I have often heard the question of the superiority of men over women discussed. When we have well reflected upon it I believe we shall think that the superiority of men lies only in the strength of their organs and a better education. Madame Dupin, who has been very pretty, and has always had more desire to think than she has actually thought, has worked ten years to prove that men have no superiority,

even bodily, over women. I do not believe that her work, if it ever appears, will change received ideas. Strength of body must give to men real superiority, that of domination. They have been masters, and they had to be so; the strong always rule the feeble. Men have founded States, because they alone could conquer and defend them. If to this physical advantage is joined that of a more enlightened and more extended education, we can conceive without difficulty that men, superior in strength, must also be superior in knowledge.

I know in women but one evil common to their sex which is not equally the attribute of men: I mean self-love, vanity of their persons. This love in women is the first of all their loves; and it is in proportion to the art shown in flattering that weakness that men secure the feelings of women; wisdom and virtue do not protect women from this weakness. Queen Elizabeth, who had the mind of a man, was flattered by a coarse speech made by an attendant on the Dutch ambassador as he looked at her; the pleasure of making an impression on the senses of an unknown man made his insolence and temerity disappear to her eyes. I know one of the greatest and most virtuous princesses in the world, who rapidly raised to the highest military rank a foreigner whom she thought was in love with her; flattered self-love persuaded her soon after that she could confide to him the welfare of her States. We see that this frenzy of vanity is a distinctive weakness of the sex, to which we must chiefly attribute the childish character which scarcely ever abandons women wholly. We may even regard this weakness as the root of all other weaknesses.

Apropos of the childish spirit, I will not let posterity believe that the Marquise du Châtelet, sung by Voltaire, and the commentator of Newton and Leibnitz, was a grave

personage. I have seen her for hours together ordering the trimmings of a gown, and setting in motion an army of pagoda idols of which her room was full.

I think that the present intercourse with women has changed the morals of Frenchmen. Formerly men were not admitted among them until they were at least thirty years old. Up to that time men lived with men, their minds were more manly, their principles of conduct more firm. To-day it is the women who are teaching men to think; at seventeen years of age, and sometimes earlier, they are received in society; it is natural at that age to regard pleasing women as the most important point of all; they are early accustomed to effeminacy, to frivolity, and they enter public employments with empty heads, and their hearts filled with false principles.

It is asked sometimes whether women are more capable of friendship than men. This question would be easy to answer if the friendship of women for men were not always a little passionate; it is rare that a woman, however virtuous she may be, does not love in her friend the charming man whom she believes she pleases to the exclusion of others. That is why the friendship of women is always jealous; but it must be allowed that it is more tender, more delicate, more spiritual, more generous, and often more faithful than that of men. What examples of this I could cite! The women friends I have lost, and those I have preserved have made the sorrow and the happiness of my life.

It must be owned, to the shame of our era, that the women whose sole object is the pleasure of loving and being loved have less of the great vices than other women. The ambition to govern belongs to the sex; but the means that women take to do so are not all legitimate; tender women seek to reign only in the hearts of their lovers, but women of

cold natures have all the other passions very keenly; pride, self-interest, ambition, revenge, reign within them in default of love; and these passions are all the more dangerous because they are nearly always hidden behind a veil of falseness or a mask of hypocrisy.

In two words, women are the most faithful friends of men, and the most doubtful friends of their own sex; they are the charm of society and the source of all our missteps.

Formerly the term "grand seigneur" was understood to mean a man of illustrious birth who possessed, with great estates, the great offices of the crown; or else one who, being master of his own region, did not disdain to live there; having influence with the king, but seldom showing himself at Court. These former great seigneurs had almost as many followers as they had vassals, and the lesser nobility did not blush to be attached to them. The reason is very simple: great seigneurs had in those days enough influence to make the fortunes of such gentlemen. But times are changed; the possessors of the great fiefs no longer live on their estates, the seigneurs of to-day have, it is true, their titles and dignities, but none of the influence that properly belongs to them. This reflection regulated my conduct in society; I sought friends among them, but I never sought for protectors, because such protection seemed to me little honourable, often useless, and not worth the price to be paid for it.

Honour has been given to Cardinal de Richelieu for having drawn the great seigneurs to Court and taking from them a power and influence which, it must be owned, they often abused. It is not true that Cardinal de Richelieu was the one to restore to the king the power that these great seigneurs had arrogated to themselves; it was Henri IV. who began, and almost completed, this great work. It is known that Henri IV., the best prince in the world, found

it necessary to sacrifice Maréchal de Biron to his authority. But nothing finer can be seen than the tranquillity which Henri IV. established and maintained in his kingdom after the League, and after he had conquered all France, bit by bit, and sword in hand. The ministry of Cardinal de Richelieu, on the contrary, was perpetually agitated by civil wars and conspiracies. He shed much blood, but not that of the great men or the clever men who resisted him. After the death of Louis XIII., who scarcely survived his minister, it was seen that the great seigneurs had not been brought by Richelieu under obedience. It was Henri IV. who began that work, and Louis XIV. who finished it.

Still, I do not know whether drawing all the great nobles to Court has really been so great a good for the king and for the kingdom. The revenues of their estates, which ought to circulate in the provinces, is now lost in the gulf of the capital; the multiplication of courtiers multiplies intrigues, embarrasses and wearies the ministers, occasions absurd claims, and adds to the expenditure of the royal treasury, — not to speak of exemptions of all kinds, ranks, distinctions, and favours bestowed.

It will be seen by what I have said how much the great seigneurs of to-day differ from those of former times. With less influence and wealth than in the days of Louis XIII. and Henri IV., they have also less dignity and less appearance than they had under Louis XIV.; their expenditures are underhand; they love money, and do not blush to ask for it, and sometimes to take it; the employment they generally make of it cannot serve as an excuse for the disorder of their affairs. They have vanity, but no real dignity. Nothing is so rare as to find *characters* at Court in the present day; no one rises above his fellows; they all appear to be of one height. People have never been able

to rely on friendship at Court, but they could always rely on hatred; to-day friends are as fickle and faithless as formerly, but enemies are no longer irreconcilable; relations change from day to day. It is very easy for the king to be master of such a Court; the trouble of it falls upon the ministers; they are obliged to become courtiers themselves, in order to decipher intrigues and not allow the game to be taken out of their hands by these sudden transformations of partners.

It must be admitted that the great seigneurs are less ignorant to-day than they were in the good old times. It is not rare in these days to find good writers among persons of rank; but it must also be said that formerly better generals and abler ministers were found among those old seigneurs, many of whom scarcely knew how to read and write; it is not books that make great men, it is public affairs, loftiness of soul, and Honour.

III.

1745–1751. — The year 1745. — The campaign of Fontenoy. — A few important events. — The year 1748. — The state of affairs from the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle to 1751. — The ministers in office till 1751. — My situation in 1751. — A conversation with M. de Puysieux.

THIS year is the period to which must be referred the origin and source of all the greatest events of my life and the brilliant fortune that I have made; if it were permissible to believe that one has a star, I was certainly in a position then to believe I had one. My youth was slipping away; I had neither an establishment nor revenues; the door of benefices was closed to me; the career of Letters, which I had entered more as an amateur than as a writer, could never become a resource to me; it had won me celebrity, and that was all I could expect of it. In spite of my economy and the entire sacrifice I had made of all the natural fancies of my age, I owed twelve hundred francs. That sum was not considerable in itself, but of course it increased yearly. This prospect alarmed me; I saw with a sort of horror that I might die without paying my debts; my soul, on which the principles of honour were stamped from childhood, suffered martyrdom. No one is more sensitive than I; master of my outward self, I have never been master of the impression that the emotions of my soul make upon my bodily machinery; anxiety consumed me; it caused a terrible upsetting of my health; bile mingled with my blood, and I had a long and distressing illness; remedies were useless, because the cause of the trouble was unknown to the doctors.

One day, during my convalescence, as I entered my room I saw a box on my bureau, carefully tied up and addressed to myself. I opened it and found a note, in which were these words: "Your situation is known; you wish to pay your debts; you will find in this box twelve hundred francs; the sender will not be made known to you until you are in a position to return them." I attributed this noble act to a hundred persons of my acquaintance who had never dreamed of it. I did not learn until two years later that I owed the homage of my gratitude to one of the most beautiful women of the Court, whom I scarcely knew, and who had refused me permission to visit her. It was, in fact, by mere chance that, relating my history one day to the Princesse de Rohan-Courcillon, I was illuminated, as it were, by a flash of light. "Ah!" I cried, "ah! it was *you*, madame." She denied it; but I made her feel that it was not becoming in a gentleman to be so long ignorant of the one to whom he owed an obligation. I have lost that friend, whose soul was as noble as her face, which the women picked to pieces, though it had no other defect than that of girlishness and too great sensibility. A part of my family, and I myself owe to her memory an eternal recollection and a changeless gratitude.

As soon as my affairs were in order I recovered my health, and as if the combinations of misfortune were exhausted in regard to me, there happened during this same winter an event which opened to me the gates of fortune.

The Duchesse de Châteauroux was dead. The king, as we know, returned to her after the Fribourg campaign. She had exacted the ruin of her enemies, and also that the Count de Maurepas, whom she regarded as the worst of them, should himself announce to her that the king recalled her. She did not long enjoy her triumph; that very day she was seized with fever, and her illness proved mortal. People did not

fail to say that she was poisoned. It may have been so, but I do not believe it.

The king was for a time in convulsions of the sharpest grief; but the affliction caused by love is violent rather than lasting; friendship alone is never consoled. The king was young, covered with glory, governing the kingdom himself, the handsomest of men, as he was the greatest of kings; we can easily see how the conquest of such a monarch would excite emulation among women. Beauty, grace, youth, or intelligence seemed to each a claim to aspire and to succeed; the crowd of female pretenders was immense. Nothing could be more amusing than to see all those young heads, each with a project for governing the State — for princes need not delude themselves, their sceptre is more loved than their person. I could not fail to be the friend of whatever mistress the king might choose; for I knew intimately all those who had pretensions.

There was a ball at Versailles in the winter of 1745, at which all the beauties of the Court and city assembled. It was a Judgment of Paris; but whichever one was to get the apple hoped also for the helm of State affairs. The king, at the beginning of the ball, ogled much a young lady of my acquaintance who had more brilliancy than beauty; the position of her parents, who were in finance, did not disgust the king, who was weary of the intrigues and the ambition of the Court women; he hoped that a bourgeoise would think of nothing but loving and being loved. He gave this young girl rendezvous at a ball which was to take place a few days later at the Hôtel-de-Ville. Her parents, alarmed but dazzled, consulted me as to what they should do; I strengthened them in honour and virtue; the young girl was not at the ball. Very great seigneurs went to her house to persuade the mother; it was all in vain; the affair came to nought, and

what does much honour to the girl in question is that she knew I was the cause of this failure, and bore me no grudge for it.

That same night the first outline of the affair of Mme. d'Étioles, now Marquise de Pompadour, was sketched. This intimacy increased day by day, but was not known to the public until some time later. Mme. d'Étioles had all the graces, all the freshness, all the gaiety of youth; she danced, sang, and played comedy marvellously well; no agreeable talent was lacking in her. She loved Letters and the arts. She had a lofty soul, sensible and generous. It is true that to make a good use of the influence she was about to have, she was deficient in knowledge of men and affairs. The public were astonished at the preference the king gave her; they were ignorant that, after her marriage, he saw her frequently when hunting in the forest of Sénart; that his equerries were constantly at her house, and that Mme. de Mailly had dreaded Mme. d'Étioles more than any other woman.

The Comtesse d'Estrades was a connection by marriage of Mme. d'Étioles; I saw the latter very often at the house of the Comtesse, who was one of my friends. Mme. d'Étioles' mother, Mme. Poisson, had not the tone of society, but she had intelligence, ambition, and courage. She and her daughter had often pressed me to go to their house; I had constantly resisted because the company they received was not what suited me. This refusal ought to have injured me with them. One day I received a note from the Comtesse d'Estrades asking me to go to her; I went. She told me that Mme. d'Étioles was the king's mistress; that, in spite of my refusals, she desired to find a friend in me, and that the king approved of it. I was asked to supper at Mme. d'Étioles' one week later to settle the agreement. I ex-

plained to Mme. d'Estrades my great repugnance to lend myself to such an arrangement; though, in actual truth, I had no part in it; but it seemed to me little in keeping with my profession. She insisted, however, and I asked for time to reflect. I consulted the most honourable persons; they all agreed that having in no way contributed to the king's passion, I ought not to refuse my friendship to an old acquaintance, nor the good which might result from my advice. I determined then to accept; they promised me and I promised them an eternal friendship. It will be seen that I kept my word. The king was to go to the war in Flanders, and Mme. d'Étioles was to pass the summer in the country. It was agreed, and approved by the master, that I should see her often.

The king was not held back from this campaign by the pleasure of his new engagement. He went very early to the army, then besieging Tournai; the dauphin accompanied him. Two bullets might have deprived France of her master and her hopes. I shall not relate the events of this campaign. The Maréchal de Saxe, after the eventful day of Fontenoy, said to the king: "Sire, you now see on what the loss or gain of a battle hangs." As long as the Maréchal de Saxe lived, he enjoyed the esteem of the army, and that of all Europe; but a portion of the Court had always refused him its suffrage: he could do without it. At his death, all voices united in regretting him; but nothing is so great a eulogy of this general as the conduct of those who commanded our armies after him, — excepting Maréchal de Broglie, who deserves to be distinguished.

Maréchal de Saxe had the genius of a commander-in-chief; he had, for war, only those defects which are inseparable from humanity. Before he commanded armies, he talked about himself and rather exaggerated his merits; his

Liotard

Maréchal de Saxe

Main

modesty came to him with his glory. I remember that some of his friends and I did all we could to make him talk of his campaigns in Flanders during a rather long supper; we could not get a word from him except this: "I made many blunders." It is a pity that so great a warrior gave himself up to love, debauchery, and bad company; it may truly be said that opera-girls deprived France of a support most necessary to her. Maréchal de Saxe liked bad company less from taste than from haughtiness; son of a king [Augustus the Strong of Poland], he preferred to live with sycophants, avoiding his own equals. His "Reveries" will seem a work of little importance to common minds, but those who have military genius will find many sublime ideas in it. The greatest gift that God can make to a monarchy is that of an able general; the mistakes of ministers are reparable, those of a general usually are not; the safety and glory of a nation are absolutely in his hands.

I was often at Étioles during the summer of 1745. With the exception of the Duc de Gontaut, who stayed there several days, I was the only man of society with whom Mme. de Pompadour could have any intercourse. I went weekly to Paris; and there I did justice, without exaggeration, to her sentiments and intentions. I advised her to protect men of letters; it was they who had given the name of Great to Louis XIV. I had no advice to give her as to seeking and cherishing honest men; I found that principle established in her soul. I did not then discover in that soul any other defect than a self-love too easy to flatter or wound, and a too general distrust as readily excited as calmed. In spite of this discovery, I resolved to always tell her the truth without any precaution; I have often risked displeasing her by this frankness and firmness; but

a true friend can play no other part. I ought to say to her praise that for twelve years she preferred my truths, sometimes harsh, to the flatteries of others. When she was presented at Court it was agreed between us that I should see her weekly for an hour or two in private. This was done for a month; but I soon saw that I excited the envy and uneasiness of the whole Court. I found the position too delicate; and I arranged with her that I should only see her with others, but that I should write to her on all that concerned the highest glory of the king, and the happiness of honest people. When I examine my own conscience, I find not the smallest reproach to make to myself during all the time this intimacy lasted; the temptations of favour, which are so dangerous, never made me deviate from principles of justice and probity.

The Court and the public were astonished to see the wife of a farmer-general, still living, presented to the queen under the title of the Marquise de Pompadour. After a time the Court and public accustomed themselves to see the same person lady of the palace of the queen, and seated in her Majesty's presence. In France the king is master of not only the property and lives of his subjects, but of their minds also. What power! and how easy it would be to turn it to great advantage!

In spite of my great favour, all I obtained at the beginning of 1746 was a lodging in the Louvre and a pension of fifteen hundred francs on the privy purse. This meagre condition continued till 1751, and the reason was this: I have never been grasping; I sweated blood when I had to tell of my affairs. Mme. de Pompadour had obtained many favours from the king, to which the ministers always put obstacles. I avoided embittering the favourite against them; so the obstacles prevailed: in a word, the Court would not lend

itself to my elevation, and I did not seek then to make a distinguished fortune.

My situation at Court was very singular up to 1751; I was placed between favour and fortune, able to dispose of the one but never attaining the other; I influenced considerable events, I had part in many benefits obtained for others, but for myself I could not procure even a moderate competence. I had limited my wants to eighteen thousand francs a year. I could have got that, and more too, if I had been willing to mix myself in what are called "affairs." But I have always regarded them with contempt and horror, in spite of the force of repeated examples. To receive money in return for obtaining an office for some one is, in the first place, selling our services; in the next, it is deceiving the sovereign by presenting to him a person who may often have no other merit than that of having bought my influence. It was not that I did not know the instability of all things human; I knew very well that Cardinal Mazarin and many others had maintained themselves only by thus putting under cover considerable sums; but honour silenced all such reflections. I kept to the same way of thinking, and still more scrupulously when I became minister.

The king, whom I saw every day at Mme. de Pompadour's, never brought himself to speak to me for three years, so great is the shyness of this prince towards persons to whom he is not used; especially if those persons have the reputation of being clever men. As soon as the king had conquered himself as far as to say a word to me he had no longer any embarrassment; he even gave me a great mark of favour by taking me with him to the little entertainments in the cabinets, where, at first, only a very few courtiers were admitted. The King, by placing me in his own box,

wished to show that he was informed of my birth. These theatricals soon became public, with more constraint to the king and much less decency.

The favour which I enjoyed, being useful only to others, made me fewer enemies than if it had been profitable to myself, but it excited the attention of the Court and the ill-will of the ministers. My friendship for Mme. de Pompadour fixed me to a plan that was very dangerous. In order not to give her umbrage, I resolved to be attached only to the king, who was my master, and to depend for my advancement only on her, who was my friend. I followed this system steadily, and I never regretted it, because it was honourable. But my attachment to the favourite never had an air of baseness or slavery; I always told her the truth, and I never sacrificed a friend to her; though I had several who might have displeased her. It was difficult for conduct so unusual to avoid annoyances and storms. If I had been ambitious I might have been more adroit; as it was, I wished to be only a friend and philosopher.

Two remarkable events followed the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle: one was the arrest in broad daylight of Prince Edward Stuart, who was bound and pinioned like a common criminal. No event ever so vexed me for the king's sake. The Pretender was inexcusable for wanting to lay down the law to France; he deserved to be arrested; but it ought to have been done at night, with the consideration due to his rank, and, above all, to his misfortunes. Those who advised the king on this occasion forgot to remind him that Prince Edward was a grandson of Henri IV. and that the French throne has ever been the support and shelter of unfortunate princes.

Another event which made much noise at Court was the disgrace of M. de Maurepas. The sudden death of Mme.

de Châteauroux had saved him from exile; but the risk he had run then did not prevent him from being on equally bad terms with Mme. de Pompadour. His system was, not to depend in any way on the favourites; a laudable system in itself, provided it did not fail in respect to the king by attacking what he loved. The Court thought it saw a coolness on the part of the king for Mme. de Pompadour, and a secret cabal went to work to bring back Mme. de Mailly, who was playing the part of the repentant Magdalen in Paris. They hoped that the king, who was used to her, would also get used to her piety. To strengthen this pious intrigue Paris was inundated with satirical songs against Mme. de Pompadour. The conspirators hoped to humiliate the king's self-love in that way, for he himself was insolently attacked in these lampoons. They grossly deceived themselves. The king was more indignant at the contempt cast upon his choice than upon the personal insults to himself. M. de Maurepas, having charge of the department of Paris and the Court, was accused of not having duly sought for the authors and disseminators of these infamies.

He was exiled, and the king's Council lost an enlightened minister and one better informed than many others on the laws and regulations of the kingdom.

The Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle (October 18, 1748) put an end to the conquests of Maréchal de Saxe and to the glory of our arms; it left in existence our differences with England, and it winked at the establishment of the Spanish princes in Italy. Hence this treaty gave occasion for two almost certain wars; one with England, the other in Italy on the death of King Ferdinand of Spain. Our alliance with the Court of Vienna saved us from that second war, which would have become general. Few persons in France perceived this good effect of the Treaty of Versailles, but, with Frenchmen,

the mind does not readily seize the connection of political ideas.

The Comte de Saint-Severin negotiated the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. As a reward he was made minister of State He was, as Voltaire somewhere calls him, "the most inefficient inefficiency" among the ministers.

As I found that favour gave me nothing but consideration and a pleasant life, but did not procure me suitable establishment, I judged it best to leave my Chapter of Brioude and enter that of Lyon. It was an honourable *pis-aller*, which I kept to fall back upon in case fortune should continue to be against me; I was connecting myself with an illustrious body in the Church of France and securing a retreat for my old age. I busied myself therefore in collecting the title-deeds necessary to prove sixteen quarterings, which the Chapter of Lyon requires before appointing to a vacancy. This precaution is very wise; it saves the Chapter from being sued by those whose proofs may be rejected, and who would not fail to appeal to Parliament to get them admitted.

My proofs were presented to the Chapter on All-Saints' day of the year 1748, and received by the Chapter on Saint-John's day of the following year. The proofs of my genealogy went back, by an almost unexampled distinction, to the year 1116; which will some day be a fine title for my family. The king has granted a decoration to the Comtes de Lyon; it consists of an enamelled cross on a red ribbon edged with blue; the two colours recalling the military nobility and the nobles, distinguished by the colour of the Orders of Saint-Louis and the Saint-Esprit. When Cardinal de Tencin saw me wearing the Lyon cross, he declared that I should soon be an ambassador; he was not far wrong.

As soon as I was a member of the Lyon Chapter I renounced frequenting theatres both at Court and in Paris;

this sacrifice cost me much. I made another which seemed to me less painful: I abandoned the frivolous style of poetry. History, politics, and morals became my only occupations; I wished to accustom the public by degrees to regard me as a man of serious mind fit for public affairs. I have all my life had the talent of transitions, which to be good should be gradual.

I have made myself a law in speaking of the affairs of State never to allow the secrets of government, whether in regard to politics or to finances, to transpire; in spite of the wisest precautions, all that is written may be made public or pass into questionable hands. Consequently, I shall speak only of affairs in general, without disclosing the secret bond that connects them, and without giving a precise idea of the state of our resources and our debts. No minister was ever more enabled than I to give an exact picture of our situation, but I shall not forget the oath which I took to the king. These Memoirs will be less interesting; but it must be remembered that I write them only for my own amusement and the information of my nephews.[1]

The Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle had procured for the king no other advantage than that of showing his moderation to Europe, and of relieving him from the prejudice, established in the days of Louis XIV., of an agressive ambition, which France can well do without if she is properly governed, and of which she cannot fulfil the object when her government is feeble or vicious.

The king, having kept none of his conquests, and having failed in the object which Maréchal de Belleisle was ex-

[1] Bernis' descendants regarded his wishes so faithfully in this respect that it was nearly 120 years before they were published or generally known. They end in the year 1758 and were first published, as already stated, in 1878. — Tr.

pected to carry out, namely, the weakening of the House of Austria and the transfer of the Empire to another family, had, of course, to expect a new war as soon as the belligerents recovered breath. But France needed a long peace; it was necessary, therefore, on the one hand, that the wisdom and foresight of the Council should carefully endeavour to end our differences with England and ward off all that might increase them; on the other, that, as we were not certain of ending the settlement of our boundaries, we should provide far in advance for our colonies, make their defensive easier and more formidable, rectify and simplify their administration, and, above all, confide it only to pure hands incapable of rapine. The whole attention of the government, in the uncertainty in which we were as to the duration of peace, ought to have been given principally to the maintenance, the increase, and the good administration of the navy.

As it is incontestable that a marine war with a great power leads, in six months or a year later, to a continental war, it was essential, 1st, to seek, after the deaths of the Maréchal de Saxe and Maréchal Löwendahl, for two generals capable of commanding our armies; because, in spite of French vanity, if the nation does not furnish great warriors the safety and glory of the State require that they be sought elsewhere; 2d, it was equally necessary to form a good militia, and make sure of the good government of the soldier by the good conduct and capacity of the officer; 3d, it was necessary to replenish our arsenals, supply our fortresses, and repair their fortifications; 4th (and most important point of all), it was essential to bring order into our finances and prepare, in advance, secure resources in case of war, to enable us to sustain it the necessary time and not be forced to a disadvantageous peace by the imperious law of a last crown in the treasury; 5th, it was plainly wisdom, in view of foreign

war, to appease the intestinal wars of religion, to prevent the two bodies of the clergy and magistracy from clashing, and that parliament should be stopped from making a species of League, injurious to the authority of the king and to the public opinion of his power and his administration; 6th, and finally, it was the part of prudence to better consolidate the political system of the king, and not allow it to depend so absolutely on the fidelity or infidelity of the King of Prussia.

In saying what ought to have been done after the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, one is stating precisely what was not done. The negotiation with England was badly conducted; it was supposed that that power neither would nor could go to war. We were in a position to make her some little sacrifices in order to establish a solid peace of which France and its commerce had need; instead of that we committed little acts of hostility against the English in America; we put up forts where they could only create jealousy; we sent much money for the proper defence of our colonies, which was ill-employed and wasted; the navy was badly administered; we searched for no generals; we enervated the militia by multiplying grades; our fortresses and arsenals were neglected; instead of paying our debts, we increased them in a time of peace; the burden on the people has not been relieved according to their needs; we have allowed religious quarrels to be revived without an effort to smother at its birth the fermentation of the clergy and the parliaments; while distrusting the King of Prussia we rested tranquilly on the faith of his alliance —in a word, we have conducted ourselves ill, and we ought to impute to our own faults all the misfortunes of the present war and the embarrassments in which we find ourselves. After giving this picture, it is essential that I should make known the ministers who at that time composed the king's Council.

The chancellor was M. de Lamoignon, whose name is illustrious in the magistracy, but who could not replace M. d'Aguesseau either for ideas or knowledge. He is a very honest man, but the post of chief of law and justice demands superior talents. The king having asked the chancellor one day from what point he had seen the fireworks given at Versailles on the birth of the Duc de Bourgogne, the Duc d'Ayen forestalled the chancellor's answer by saying, "From his dining-room, sire," — M. de Lamoignon having gone into his hay-loft to see the sight. When it is permissible to make such jokes as that on the head of law and justice, what authority can he have over the magistracy?

The Marquis de Puysieux had the department of Foreign Affairs after the dismissal of the Marquis d'Argenson, surnamed the Stupid [*le Bête*] to distinguish him from his brother, Comte d'Argenson. M. de Puysieux has a wise and just mind; he speaks nobly and with dignity; his principles and his acts are honest; he knows his master well, and knows how to conduct himself at Court and in public; but one feels the difference there is between an adroit and virtuous courtier and an able minister, — between an upright mind and a broad one.

The Comte d'Argenson was charged with the war department. On entering office he had created, so to speak, the king's armies. I have known few men who had more ideas in their minds than he; but by dint of multiplying the superior grades in the army he extinguished emulation, and gave birth, in subalterns, to misplaced ambition. His quarrels with M. de Machault were very pernicious to the king's affairs, and his rupture with Mme. de Pompadour finally deprived the State of an enlightened minister.

M. de Machault, successively controller-general, minister of the marine, and Keeper of the Seals, had at that time only

the finance department. He was beginning to show the despotism of his mind, and he hid beneath a cold exterior and a grave countenance the little depth of his knowledge, which was veiled by the prestige of a rather penetrating mind and a laconic language that was clear and precise. In trying to destroy the privileges of the clergy he unmasked too soon his real design of suppressing all privileges; from that time he aimed for the post of Keeper of the Seals. The chief president [of parliament], M. Maupeou, also had views for that place. The Court had flattered his hopes, and he restrained parliament just so long as he believed those hopes well-founded. M. de Machault, after having displeased Mme. de Pompadour, found the secret, not of pleasing her, but of governing her in State affairs.

M. Rouillé had succeeded the Comte de Maurepas as minister of the marine, but he did not replace him in either knowledge or capacity; without intending to be governed by his subordinates, he was so, despotically, for the simple reason that where one is not well-informed one must rely on others.

Besides these departments the king had as ministers of the State: Cardinal de Tencin, who soon retired to his diocese, and did well; the Maréchal de Noailles, a man of much intelligence, writing well and having much information, but more of a courtier than a statesman; the Comte de Saint-Severin, whose greatest merit was to have persuaded M. de Puysieux that he was a great man, descended in direct line from the kings of Aragon; the bishop of Mirepoix, who ruled the affairs of the Church with the harshness and despotism of a monk; he had placed in the see of Paris M. de Beaumont, cherished in Vienne, adored at Bayonne, fitted to occupy those two places, but not to fill a post of such importance as the archbishopric of Paris.

Though the Prince de Conti was not in the Council, he worked with the king on matters of importance, more foreign than internal.[1] He is a prince of much intelligence and knowledge, but, unless the king admits into the Council a prince of the blood, it would be wiser to keep him aloof from great affairs. He has quarrelled with Mme. de Pompadour. All these quarrels of the king's mistress with the ministers have been the source, or the occasion, of great troubles and misfortunes to the kingdom.

I was too well-informed as to public affairs not to fear to embark upon them; on the one hand, I should have been glad to be useful to the State, and to make myself an honourable reputation; on the other, I foresaw the confusion into which the evils of the coming wars would almost infallibly cast the country. Moreover, I knew my own nature; I foresaw that I should be too sensitive to the evils of the State as soon as I was charged with some administration; that, jealous of my honour and reputation as well as the glory of my master, I should make every effort to re-establish order, regardless of the enemies so firm a course would give me; from that I foresaw dismissal and exile if circumstances called me to the ministry. All these reflections attached me more and more to the free and philosophical life that I was leading; but I was thirty-six years old, I had no career, and a numerous family depended on my making a fortune to supply the deficiencies of theirs. This last consideration was stronger than my repugnances.

A step which I took at this time ended my irresolution. There had been some question for me of a place as coun-

[1] Louis-François de Bourbon, great-nephew of the Great Condé; his grandmother was Anne Martinozzi, Mazarin's niece; he managed the secret correspondence of Louis XV. with French agents in the north of Europe, one object of which was to put him on the throne of Poland. — TR.

cillor of State on Church Affairs, which I should have obtained if the dauphin had not asked for it for the Abbé de Marbeuf, one of his tutors. I wrote to Mme. de Pompadour to ask for the next place of the kind that fell vacant. She answered that the king would willingly give it to me if I served him in his negotiations; but that his Majesty was surprised that I had made no effort to enter that career, for which both he and his ministers thought me fitted. The Marquis de Paulmy [son of the Marquis d'Argenson] having been associated with his uncle in the ministry of war, the embassy to Switzerland was vacant. I applied for it, but it was given to M. de Chavigny in reward for his long services; that of Venice was promised me, with an order to keep the matter secret.

Meantime M. de Puysieux resigned the ministry of Foreign Affairs. He would have liked the king to choose M. de Saint-Severin to succeed him, but his Majesty, influenced by M. de Machault and the Maréchal de Noailles, preferred M. de Saint-Contest, who, to speak frankly, brought no other qualifications for so great an office than that of being the son of a minister plenipotentiary at the Congress of Rastadt, and of having read the newspapers assiduously for thirty years. This new minister was not one of my friends: first, because his mind and mine were not of the same stuff; second, because his creator, M. de Machault, had never liked me. Thus it came about that I was treated rather shabbily in meeting the immense costs of my outfit; so that I began my diplomatic career by being forced to borrow eighty thousand francs, with the annoyance of passing in public for a well-treated favourite.

As soon as I had made up my mind to enter upon a public career I renounced all pleasures, all amusements, and all tastes which did not conform to it; I informed myself funda-

mentally on whatever might help me to some superiority; and I accustomed myself henceforth to adopt the tone and manners of foreigners; through the flexibility of my nature, I soon had the tone of the foreign ministers then in Paris.

I formed a plan at this time for twenty years, which I desired to devote to the service of the king in foreign Courts; all places at our own Court were excluded from this plan; and my final prospect was — after serving the State, being useful to my family, and acquiring reputation for myself — to spend the remainder of my days far from the great world and from public affairs, in the enjoyment of my life and of friends. Circumstances which it was impossible to foresee subsequently upset a plan so wise, and so in harmony with my inclinations.

Up to the moment when I was appointed to the embassy of Venice, I had passed in the world for an honest, agreeable man, having many talents, but too lazy to employ them usefully, and too devoid of ambition ever to make my way. I warned my intimate friends that as soon as I was an ambassador I should have a totally different reputation in society; I should be supposed to have vast ambition, and the art to have known how to conceal it for seventeen years under a mask of careless indifference. I was not mistaken. My embassy was announced the last of October, 1751; I thanked the king the next day, and as I left his cabinet a courtier said to me with a sly air, "Your Excellency, I offer my congratulations to *your Eminence;*" and a few steps farther on, another courtier said with a rather sour smile, "Monsieur l'abbé, the file grates [*la lime sourde*]." A week later the news ran through Paris that my embassy to Venice would not last long, as I should soon be recalled to the post of tutor to the Duc de Bourgogne; I was supposed to have that aim, and they doubtless imagined that by unmasking it

they could make me miss it. From that moment I lost the flattering illusion of having many friends; I discovered that, on the contrary, there were many who envied me.

I ought to remark here that during ten years of favour all I had obtained was fifteen hundred francs a year, to which I limited my ambition. Therefore it was proved to me that I could not make a medium fortune, for as soon as I took the resolution to rise to a great one, embassies were flung at my head. Did that mean that Providence destined me for great things? The end alone can clear up this doubt.

I think I ought to relate here a conversation which I had at Fontainebleau with M. de Puysieux, who, although he had resigned the ministry of Foreign Affairs, still preserved a portion of the king's confidence in regard to them. This conversation will show better than anything else what the spirit was that guided my conduct at Court.

It was rather extraordinary that I had been appointed to an embassy without ever having spoken to the minister of Foreign Affairs, or ever paying him a visit. I did not wish this singularity to make a bad impression on M. de Puysieux' mind, because I respected him. Accordingly, after the first compliments, I told him that I had come to make my general confession, and I was too jealous of his esteem to let him think I had neglected to fulfil a duty I owed to him, or that I was impertinent, or a man of the other class.

"It is true," he replied, "that you have had the air of saying, 'Messieurs, I wish to be an ambassador, and I shall be one without your meddling in it.'" This answer made me laugh, and I at once began my justification and told him my history ever since my arrival in Paris. I made him take notice of the honesty and courage of my conduct; I justified the frivolous works of my youth by showing that I held them at their just value; but I made him agree that without

them I should never have acquired the reputation for intellect which put me in the way of being chosen for great places. I made him see the close connection there had always been between my ideas and my actual plan of conduct, and that in leading the life of a man of society I had reflected much and had studied the heart and the passions of men.

I made him remark how modestly I had used my favour; how my attachments had been free from baseness and flattery; and to what a point I had been disinterested. As all I said was sustained by facts well-known to M. de Puysieux, I saw that my argument made an impression, and brought the minister suddenly to the delicate point which touched himself. I then employed to win him the only art I know — that of truth. I said to him: —

"You will not accuse me of being ignorant that, wishing to be an ambassador, my first step ought to have been to ask for your consent; neither will you suspect me of having neglected that act of propriety and obligation from misplaced arrogance. I shall therefore tell you the secret of it: I wanted to be an ambassador, and I never should have been one had I set foot in your house. You can readily see that as soon as I appeared there all the Court would have said, 'It is now clear enough; he is aiming for the Foreign Affairs.' From that instant all who had the same aim, the friends of the Court and of some of the ministers, would have persuaded Mme. de Pompadour that it was breaking my neck to let me be appointed an ambassador before my fortune was made; that I should have to begin by running in debt; that the Bishop of Mirepoix would still refuse me an abbey, or if he gave it, its revenues would go to the payment of my debts; therefore that the true way to help me was to conquer the obstinacy of the Bishop of Mirepoix,

and induce the king to give me some other favour which would put me in the way to serve him and not ruin myself. This apparently friendly language would have made an impression on the mind of my friend; and if it did not change her intentions it would certainly have retarded the result." (M. de Puysieux agreed to that.) "Well, then," I said, "by taking the course of not seeing you, and being scarcely known to you, I calculated that I should infallibly become an ambassador."

M. de Puysieux began to laugh; he embraced me and said: "I now think that you are worthy to be one. I will return you confidence for confidence; I shall not conceal that I did all that depended on me to prevent the king from choosing you for his ambassador. I could not tell him you were a scoundrel, because every one avers you are an honest man; or that you are not a gentleman, because it is proved that you come of an ancient race; nor could I say that you were a fool, because everybody says you have intellect; but I made him fear that your intellect would turn to the side of imagination and away from that of good sense. He wanted to send you to Poland; I insisted on the danger of intrusting you with so delicate a mission, and I consented finally, but with difficulty, to the Venetian embassy, because if you committed follies there they would not be important."

This frankness on the part of M. de Puysieux touched me to the bottom of my heart. I asked him for his friendship and promised him mine. He soon gave me, as I shall tell hereafter, flattering marks of his esteem; and I have been fortunate enough in my turn to prove to him mine.

It was in the same frank and open manner that I gradually won, if not the friendship, at least the esteem of all the ministers of the king before I started for Venice.

PART SECOND.

IV.

1752-1755. — That which preceded my Departure for Venice. — My Début there. — The foreign Ministers resident in Venice. — Affairs which I negotiated during my Embassy. — Some interesting Particulars. — Journey to Parma early in 1755. — Return to Paris in June, 1755. — State of the Court and Country in 1755.

I HAD changed my condition, I now changed my life; my mind, which, in my days of idleness, had busied itself solely in works of pure charm, now applied itself solely to public affairs. My conversion in this respect has been so sincere that I have lost the taste and talent that I once had for poetry. It was only by accident, to conjure away my griefs or my weariness, that I had given such career to my imagination; serious things were of a nature that best suited the character of my own mind; therefore, on entering upon the duties of public life I was not, as they say, all abroad. The study that I had made of the government of Venice, of the manners and spirit of that republic, put into my mind such clear ideas on the subject that I did not have many corrections to make later. They sent me to Venice as into a *cul de sac* of little interest, but I resolved to make my despatches more interesting than those of the king's ministers in the chief Courts of Europe, and to find the art and the means of soon acquiring the reputation of a meritorious ambassador. It will be seen that I did not disappoint my own hopes.

I left the Court in the agitation of a most complicated intrigue. Clear-sighted persons thought they saw a diminu-

tion in the favour of Mme. de Pompadour; they suspected that the king had a fancy for Mme. de Choiseul, a little serpent whom the marquise had warmed in her bosom. I could not count securely on any of the king's ministers. M. de Puysieux had known me so recently, and M. d'Argenson, towards whom, in spite of his quarrel with Mme. de Pompadour, I had always shown the most honourable and courageous conduct, had very weak regard for me, which was not likely to resist long the influence of his mistress, Mme. d'Estrades, who had ceased to like me when I could not be induced to abandon, like herself, Mme. de Pompadour. If I had been less honourable I might have had the support of the Prince de Conti, who wished to attach me to him and to have me appointed to the embassy to Poland in order to execute there a scheme known only to himself, the king, and M. d'Argenson, which was revealed to me. But the Prince de Conti was the declared enemy of Mme. de Pompadour, and that was enough to deprive me of his useful protection, which might, according to circumstances, become necessary to me.

I may add to this the aversion M. de Saint-Contest showed to me. He tried to treat me superciliously, but I did not allow it, and, although I was dependent on him, I spoke to him firmly, knowing well that inferior ministers are more rancorous than superior ones. Moreover, I left beside Mme. de Pompadour M. de Machault, in whom at that time she had the utmost confidence, and who could not endure me. The king had promised me the first vacant place of Councillor of State for Church affairs, but the promise might be forgotten. The Bishop of Mirepoix, despotic distributor of benefices, was against me; I had borrowed eighty thousand francs, and I had no property to cover that sum. The present was disquieting, the future alarming.

Under these circumstances my friends wanted me to remain at Court, enjoy the salary of my embassy, and wait to see if Mme. de Pompadour succumbed or triumphed. The advice seemed wise, but my opinion was different. I was resolved to make my way by my own work and the development of my talents. I saw in this course another advantage, that of allaying the jealousies I was beginning to excite at Court. No one would fear me in Venice; the worst that could happen to me would be to be forgotten; therefore I urged my departure with as much eagerness as other ambassadors show in delaying theirs. Mine was fixed for August, 1752.

The quarrel of the Archbishop of Paris with the parliament was beginning to grow heated; I foresaw the results with a precision that surprises me now that I look back upon it. I wrote a memorial containing the principles of conduct which the king ought to maintain under the circumstances; in it I foretold the disasters which would infallibly arrive if these principles were abandoned. Shall I say it? I foretold in 1752 that spirit of fanaticism which had produced so many dangerous attempts during the reigns of Henri III. and Henri IV.; in 1757 my prediction proved but too true. I communicated this paper to M. de Puysieux, who was struck by it. He took a copy, and sent it to the king without a word to me, but he cut out the passage relating to horrors already produced and about to be produced again by fanaticism. He accompanied the memorial with a letter in which he sung my praises and assured the king that I should be one of his best ministers; that my memorial contained the true principles; that the king would do well to keep it always in his portfolio and under his eye; and finally that it was without my knowledge that it was sent, and he asked the same secrecy

from the king. His Majesty kept it faithfully, and never said a word of it to me.

I took leave of his Majesty in the month of August, and went to Lyon to the house of Cardinal de Tencin, where I met the Maréchal de Belleisle, with whom I made fuller acquaintance. Cardinal de Tencin, who had taken me in great affection since seeing me on the road to fortune, offered me two hundred thousand francs when I left him for my embassy, using these remarkable words: "In the career on which you are entering, remember that talent does not suffice to do everything." On my return from my embassy he wished to make me his coadjutor in the archbishopric of Lyon. I did not yield to any of his offers, but I am not sorry to record the recollection of them. It is to be remarked that this cardinal, who had been the scourge of the Jansenists when Abbé de Tencin and Archbishop of Embrun, ceased to persecute them towards the end of his life.

I may say here that if I had been willing to accept all the offers made to me at this time I could have carried with me to Venice a million in ready money. And what is very singular is that when I was minister and secretary of State, enjoying the favour of my master, no one ever offered me money. Was this because men expect more of a man who is beginning to make his fortune than of a man who has made it? The first can only rise, the second can only fall.

I had been announced in Venice as an agreeable man and a younger son without resources. People expected gallantry and a very ordinary style of living. I balked this public expectation on both points; I made very honourable outlays, and I kept my house without abusing any of the privileges of an ambassador. I used that of free customs with great restraint; this is the only honest way to retain a right to them. My predecessors had brought in contraband supplies

with more or less ostentation; I abolished that unworthy system. An ambassador is the representative of his master and his nation; what care he ought therefore to take of their fame and his own honour. I wished my household to be regulated like that of a Chartreux establishment; I required that silence and order should reign there; that my retinue should be polite and respectful towards all citizens, and that libertinism should be banished. Two or three timely examples made me master of establishing these rules and forcing their observance. This wholly new system of life attracted the attention of the Venetian government and caused a little jealousy in the ambassadors from other Courts.

M. de Chavigny, who preceded me, had lived only eighteen months in Venice. He made himself a reputation there by his good fortune in becoming, in a way, the mediator of the disputes between the Republic and the Court of Vienna on the subject of the patriarchate of Aguila. It was not easy for a new minister to make such a predecessor forgotten; all the more because from his present embassy in Switzerland he continued, under the rose, to meddle with the matters with which I was charged. Without injuring the union and friendship which existed between us, and by taking the tone and air of a disciple rather than a rival, I cut short these little intrigues and soon made myself an independent name and consideration.

When I arrived in Venice I found the people, and a large part of the government, Austrian or English; the French were held in such dislike that they ran the risk of being insulted if they appeared in public places. I set myself to change that national feeling; and I succeeded by means that are simple but infallible whenever persons have the intelligence to adopt them, and the steadiness to employ them without interruption. I studied the manners and customs of the place; I

conformed to them without having an air of being annoyed by them; and I kept the spirit of my own nation only in those graces which please, without any tincture of that arrogance that makes us hated by foreigners.

The Venetians were astonished after a time to find me insensible to the charms of women, in a country where that weakness is not thought a vice. From this time the Senate, which is informed and takes note of all, considered me as a man master of himself, on whom the force of example had no power. It wondered, nevertheless, how a cadet without fortune could be so magnificent and disinterested. A crowd of illustrious foreigners of all nations, whom the pompous ceremonies of Holy Week drew to Rome, passed through Venice; my house was open to them, and there they were treated with distinction, magnificence, and ease. No other foreign minister would do this; they preferred money to the reputation it gives. As for me, I regarded these travelling foreigners as my trumpeters, who would sound my praises throughout Europe; I knew that the flattering noise would echo to Versailles, and when my friends scolded me for the great expenses I incurred I answered: "I am putting my money into a sinking-fund at very advantageous interest. You will see what it will bring me back in abbeys and dignities. Besides, I represent a great master; I wish to re-conquer for France the heart and mind of Italians, who are eager for show and for all that has an air of magnificence. Moreover, it is my business to efface the shame of the niggardliness of my predecessors."

I shall always advise the king to send magnificent ambassadors to foreign courts, but, to avoid expense, I should not keep regular ambassadors there, with fixed residence; I should employ habitually simple ministers, able men and well-chosen, but whose character and position would need no

display. When I sent an ambassador extraordinary, I should surround him with all the pomp and majesty suitable to the master he represents. It must be owned that if that ambassador has not a great and noble soul his Court may give him a great salary uselessly. Avarice and meanness will show behind riches. It is more necessary in republics than elsewhere that ambassadors should make a great appearance.

Before my embassy to Venice, the nobility in the theatre and other places of meeting never bowed to the ambassadors, nor did the ambassadors bow to them. I changed that savage custom; I accustomed the nobles and the ladies to be bowed to by me, and to return my bow; gradually they became so accustomed to it that they ended by bowing first. I alone enjoyed that civility which the other foreign ministers had tried in vain to obtain.

The embassy to Venice is usually considered as a post of little importance. This is why the Courts have not, for a long time, sent men of much ability to fill it. It is true that it does not seem very necessary to do so in view of the little influence the Republic of Venice now has in the affairs of Europe. And yet I do not know a better school in which to train ambassadors. Nothing is of indifference in that country; every word, every action produces its effect; thus an observing and reflecting minister accustoms himself to reason out all his actions, and to consider nothing as of no consequence. Moreover, in Venice he treats with an invisible government, and always by writing; which forces him to great circumspection in order to send nothing to the Senate that is not well-digested and maturely reflected. He must, moreover, if he hopes to make the affairs with which he is charged succeed, employ an industry all the greater because it must be employed with prudence.

The Court of Rome, on my arrival in Venice, had as

nuncio M. Caraccioli, a man regular in his morals, full of fire and activity, but less liked than feared and respected. I allied myself closely with him, — keeping, however, the reserve that should always be maintained with the ministers of other Courts, and especially the Italian Courts.

The Spanish ambassador in Venice was M. de Montalegro, Duke of Salas, who had been for ten years prime-minister in Naples. He is a man of much intelligence and talent, who has all the ideas necessary to render a man agreeable in society; it is a pity that so many fine qualities are obscured by defects and weaknesses. My intimacy with this minister was agreeable to him, and very useful to me. M. de l'Encenada, prime-minister of Spain, had been his comrade and remained his friend, as far as two ambitious ministers can be friends. These two men were in regular correspondence; I managed so well that before long the letters were communicated to me; and in that way I was able to give my Court much more correct ideas than M. de Duras, then the king's ambassador at Madrid. His accounts and mine did not agree; the king's Council had, naturally, more confidence in its minister on the spot than in an ambassador in Venice who had not the Court of Spain before his eyes. So M. de Saint-Contest and the Maréchal de Noailles made light of my tales; but in course of time they saw that my predictions were correct, for while M. de Duras was assuring the king that M. de l'Encenada was secure as prime-minister, I, on the contrary, had for some time past announced his fall. The veil was torn off, and they began to have faith in my statements.

My principal usefulness in Venice was saving the money of the king. But I did give very good news about all the Courts of Europe, which I procured by my industry, and at my own expense. No minister in a foreign land was ever

better informed than I, without showing the least curiosity or eagerness for information; the spies that were sent to fathom me were the ones from whom I got most profit and knowledge of what it was important to know. I have always had a talent for reading physiognomies, and enlightening myself by chance words, of which I have often made the application with great accuracy.

My work in Venice was thus heavy without my having anything to do, or the appearance of doing anything. I chose the post-days to go to the theatre, and to pay visits; whereas my colleagues were mysteriously shut-up on those days. But I had no mistresses, and the evenings were long. My readings and writings were incessant, though I gave more time to society than others. So much work, joined to want of exercise and the swampy air one breathes in Venice, began to injure my health; I may say that no one ever sacrificed a finer or better health to the service of his king.

Nothing could be more limited than the instructions given to me. M. de Saint-Contest had few views and little industry. He had dismissed the Abbé de la Ville [chief clerk of the ministry of Foreign Affairs], who was a man of mind and talent, and had put in his place M. de la Chapelle, who thought he was a philosopher, and was, in point of fact, a very ordinary man, and a very lazy one. He said to me one day that the proper style for despatches was very different from the academic style to which I was accustomed. I answered that I knew but two sorts of style; that of men of intelligence, and that of fools; and when I reflected that it was to those two personages that my despatches were addressed, the pen would sometimes drop from my hand.

I sometimes used with the Venetians an innocent trick,

which always succeeded. I knew they opened my letters, and when I wanted to impress something on them I wrote a despatch, which I was careful not to put in cipher, in which I advised the manner in which they should be treated in case they refused to do as we wished. They read it, and it frightened them. But of course I could not often use that means.

The confidence of the Republic in me grew to be so great that in a very serious squabble which it had with Genoa it chose me as mediator; and the two republics accepted the plan of agreement which I laid down. It was after this affair, which made much noise in Italy, that the Senate charged its ambassador in France, on three different occasions, to express to the king the satisfaction that all classes had received through my conduct. M. de Saint-Contest did not think it worth while to tell this to his Majesty, and the Republic, being informed after the death of that minister of this omission, renewed the same orders in a manner still more precise and flattering to me, so that the king was at last informed of my success.

No ambassador before me had ever sent to the Court such detailed memoranda on all the parts of the Venetian government; I fulfilled my ministry in that respect with the greatest amplitude, and I will venture to say that my despatches made the Republic of Venice better known than all that had been previously written on that celebrated and singular government. I employed, for the writing of these memoranda, one of my secretaries at the embassy, the Abbé Deshaises, who has talent and merit, and in whom I know no other defect than that of being a little too much convinced of it. I charged his comrade-secretary, Emmanuel Brun, with the arrangement of all the documents and memoranda which had relation to the affairs about which I ne-

gotiated with the Republic. He is a man less brilliant than solid, who has an upright mind and an honest heart. When I was dismissed he exposed himself to the loss of his position in the ministry of Foreign Affairs to accompany me into exile; I regard him as my friend.

It will be seen, from this exposition of affairs which I had to manage in Venice, that the field was a very restricted one. I looked about me for a way to extend it. I knew that M. de Saint-Contest had taken to the king's Council only such of my despatches as were devoid of facts and reflections, and all those which could give an opinion of my ideas and my views were pitilessly suppressed, as well as all my memorials relating to the government of Venice. (M. Rouillé, who succeeded M. de Saint-Contest, afterwards resuscitated this buried labour and brought it before the Council.) It was therefore important for me to find subjects of such interest that M. de Saint-Contest could not avoid laying my despatches before the king. This was difficult to do in times of peace and from the midst of a republic eternally neutral by system, education, and perhaps necessity. I despaired of my object, when one day, looking over a map of the Venice territory, I was struck by the utility this government might be to France in any wars that we might have with the House of Austria in Italy. I saw that the Republic was in relation to Germany what the King of Sardinia was in respect to France; that is to say, that both are masters of the passes and may be regarded as the gates to Italy. I perceived that by securing to ourselves the Grisons we effectually closed all entrance into Italy to the Germans. This point of view suddenly made the embassy intrusted to me very important to my eyes. But I feared that my predecessors had had the same idea, and that it might be used-up by being handled. I therefore looked through all the despatches of the ambassa-

dors of the king in Venice for the past fifty years, and I found with as much surprise as joy that so simple an idea and easy to seize was perfectly new. From that moment I saw no difficulty in making my correspondence interesting, and I formed the bold project of persuading the Republic of Venice to put itself, withstanding its pride, under the protection of the king.

To succeed in this design I felt it was necessary to win all minds, to please equally the people and the nobles, and become in a way a citizen of Venice. I succeeded in this preliminary above all hopes. It cost me much in care and money. I helped the poor nobles, I succoured the indigent people, I flattered the republican pride, I interested the naturally good hearts of the Venetians. In a word, I changed the mind of that nation, deeply prejudiced against ours, to such a point that a Senator said to me one day that the Senate was so convinced of my impartiality that if I asked anything of it contrary to its interests it would have difficulty in refusing it, and its confidence in me would not be shaken.

When I had got all minds into this condition, I waited till some event should enable me to lead the Senate to feel the necessity of gaining a protector, and from that to the idea of the protection of France.

I told no one of my project; I wanted the republic to come of itself to think of what I desired; I made it perpetually conscious of how much it had to fear a project of aggrandizement from the House of Savoie, and in consequence of the losses made by that of Austria; the latter House was looking for compensation for Servia and for the kingdoms of Naples, Sicily, and a part of Lombardy. From what State could she get it with less risk and more facility than the State of Venice, whose fortresses and, above all, whose militia, were scarcely respectable.

These reflections were like so many serpents which I set gliding through the heart of the Senate. They laid their spawn, which a single event might hatch. That event was not long in coming.

The projected marriage of the third Archduke of Austria with the Hereditary Princess of Modena, gave me a canvas, which I filled with some dexterity and cleverness. I made the Venetians aware that the claims of the former Dukes of Ferrara on the Polesina, the fiefs of Este, and a part of Padua were about to be revived, and that the son of the Empress Maria Theresa would have all the forces necessary to support these old claims, and to make them an incontestable right. I made the picture so striking that the Senate was almost terrified. They began to talk to me of the measures they ought to take, and they said that the Republic had the utmost confidence in the friendship of the king, and his protection. As soon as I had heated these spirits I became myself much cooler. I even made myself aloof by showing that I might embarrass my Court; and when matters grew more advanced and nearer to maturity, I exacted that the Republic should, by some positive act or writing, authorize me to make my Court a statement of the Senate's views, without which the king's Council might suppose that I related fables merely to do myself credit.

The Republic objected strongly to so delicate a step, but I finally brought the Senate to it on the occasion of the visit of the Duc de Penthièvre [Louis de Bourbon, son of the Comte de Toulouse, legitimatized son of Louis XIV.]. This prince was travelling incognito; but the king desired that he should be received with the honours due to his rank. It should be remarked that no prince of the blood had ever openly passed through Venice. I induced the Senate to violate its customs in the reception of the Duc de

Penthièvre; he was received as son of a king; and in the speech pronounced on that occasion by the son of the Procurator Emo, the Republic openly declared its sentiments on the protection it sought from France. A copy of this discourse was sent to me, which I transmitted to Versailles; but, to my great astonishment, the minister of Foreign Affairs did not approve of taking the Republic of Venice under the protection of France. It may be said that by this indifference he deprived the reign of Louis XV. of a great lustre, and, it may be, of a great utility during future wars in Italy. It will be seen by what I have just said that I did in Venice something that was out of the common, and also that I little thought in that year, 1754, that I should be in 1756 the negotiator of an alliance between the Courts of Versailles and Vienna.

I have never ceased to wonder that Venice, placed between ten different States, without gates or walls, where soldiers or guards are never seen, which is the receptacle of all the evil-doers of the region, and where there is almost never a public execution, should yet be the city of Italy in which there is least murder, and least robbery. I have seen on Shrove Tuesday, in the Piazza San Marco, more than forty thousand persons assembled; one could hear a pin drop during the plays which were acted for the people; not even a handkerchief is lost; and yet there are neither sergeants nor archers to restrain the crowd. The reason for the order that reigns in Venice is the certainty every one has that the government is informed of everything, and that the State inquisitors will put to death without formalities those who disturb public order. The fear of secret executions awes men more than public punishment.

I must here relate a little fact which proves the consideration that the Senate of Venice showed to me. A

portion of the nobility protected the Abbé Chiari, a rival, very inferior, to the celebrated Goldoni, who is the Molière of the Italians. This abbé gave to the public a comedy entitled "The Venetian Lady in Paris." The play had a great success on its first representation, but I was warned that it spoke indecently of French valour. The Austrian ambassador (Rosemberg) urged me, no doubt maliciously, to go and see the play. I promised him to go the next day, — which I did; and I saw throughout the performance that all eyes were turned to me to examine the expression of my face, on which no displeasure appeared. The next day the government sent questioners to ask what I thought of the comedy; I said simply that I thought it pretty, except the part of a Frenchman, for the first rule of the stage was to give to each nation the character that belonged to it. I said no more; and that night as the play was about to begin before an audience more numerous than before, a messenger from the State inquisitors arrived with an order not to play the piece, which, in spite of cabals, has never been returned to the stage. The next day an amusing notice was posted up which said: *La Veneziana in Parigi morta improvisamente del morbo gallico.*

It must not be supposed that, although the Venetian nobles are forbidden to hold any intercourse with ambassadors (a very wise severity; if the Republic ever renounces it, she will lose her morals, and soon she will change her laws; the one follows the other), it must not be thought, I say, that in spite of this rigour foreign ministers do not have any sort of intercourse with the magistrates; they speak to one another by third parties; they communicate many things by signs at the Opera, a circumstance which renders the frequenting of theatres and the use of the mask necessary to the foreign ministers. Very warm and constant friendships are even formed be-

tween them and the Venetians. Such has been the union established between me and the Procurator Emo, who by his wisdom, his ideas, and his enlightenment may be regarded as the first man in the Republic. On arriving in Venice I asked who was the man of the most credit and influence and who was the woman who had the most important friends. They named to me the Procurator Emo and Madame Barbarigo. From that moment I directed all my coquetries towards those two personages; they succeeded, for I have been able to count them among my veritable friends. Some days before my departure from Venice I had an opportunity to speak to Madame Barbarigo; she promised me her friendship in a very amusing manner: "Be sure, Monsieur l'ambassadeur," she said, "that I shall be ever constant to you and never faithful." I know that she kept her word. I had spoken to her but twice, and only once to the Procurator Emo; but we always love a little where we esteem much.

I brought from Venice a very rare manuscript, in which the genealogies of the Venetians are drawn at full length, as much in what is mythical as in what is true. Though this manuscript destroys a number of chimeras, it proves that the ancient Venetian families may boast, with just claims, that their nobility goes farther back than that of any other in Europe; and as each patrician exercises in a measure the functions of sovereignty, we must agree that those who are the most ancient have a marked advantage over the less illustrious nobles. The House of France alone is out of this ruling, for nothing is comparable to eight hundred years of royalty, and such royalty!

I had asked permission to pay my court to Madame Infanta [Louise-Élisabeth of France, daughter of Louis XV.][1] on her return from her journey to France; it was granted, and

[1] Married to the Duke of Parma, second son of Philip V. of Spain.— Tr.

I went to Parma early in the month of January, 1755. I there found awaiting me very urgent letters from Court requesting me to return at once to Versailles. Mme. de Pompadour, in one of hers which had been sent back from Turin, supposed me already on my way. This urgency gave me food for thought, because the motive for my recall with so much eagerness was not explained. Madame Infanta, to whom I showed the letters, and to whom the king wrote regularly every week, could not enlighten me. By dint of reflection, I divined the real object of the journey they proposed (for M. Rouillé, then minister of Foreign Affairs, did not give me a positive order to return). I imagined that the Court had at last opened its eyes to the accuracy of the statements I had made about the Spanish Court, and that there was doubtless a desire to recall the Duc de Duras and send me in his place.

With this idea, which proved in the end correct, I decided to reply that, unless a positive order were sent to me, I would not leave Italy at a time when my presence was necessary there. The Sultan had just died; the king had also just lost M. des Alleurs, his ambassador at Constantinople. His Majesty at this time had only a chargé d'affaires in Vienna. Thus I was the only minister to give proper news of the Porte at the beginning of the new reign. Moreover, the affair of the "Decree" had put a coldness between the Court of Rome and the Republic of Venice, which was then in a state of fermentation [a Decree suppressing various privileges of the Court of Rome in relation to dispensations, briefs, bulls, and indulgences]. The Comte de Stainville, now Duc de Choiseul, a friend of Pope Benedict XIV., had taken this affair much to heart, and advised the pope to carry it through with a high hand, which did not seem to me the best means of success.

All these circumstances needed attention. I had, moreover, come to a resolution to enter Orders; a course I had always resisted taking so long as I was urged to do so. My intention was to go into retreat on returning to Venice and prepare myself to enter the Order of sub-deacons.

On this answer, which I sent to M. Rouillé, the king said that I must be allowed to do as I wished, and be told to return whenever I judged it best to do so. I congratulated myself then on the wise decision I had made to remain some time longer in Italy. In so doing, I gave the Duc de Duras time to improve his position, and I left the Court to recall him if it wished, without my having any part in the matter. The Duc de Duras was my friend from our school days; I owed him consideration; besides which, it would have been imprudent in me to offend his mother, Mme. la maréchale, a woman who knows very well how to assist and how to injure. Accordingly, I paid my court to Madame Infanta for three months; I won her esteem and confidence, which she gave me until her death, no matter what people have said about it. This princess had great qualities and the defects of a child. She did me, during my stay in Parma, many services with the king, the dauphin, and the royal family; I have been fortunate enough since then to render her others of still greater importance.

In the month of April I left Parma and returned to Venice, where I made a two weeks' retreat; after which I took Orders as a sub-deacon from the hands of the Patriarch, Monsignore Alviso Foscari, who was the best and most saintly old man I have ever known. After the ordination he said to me, "Now I can sing the song of Simeon."

The ministers no longer urged me to return to France; in fact, I saw that they felt a little embarrassed to know what to say to me. But I was nearly forty years old, with no solid

prospect before me. I needed an abbey and the place of councillor of State for the Church, which had long been promised to me. My presence at Court became necessary for the arrangement of my private affairs; I therefore put in order those of the king, and left Venice the last of May, 1755, to go to Parma and thence to France. I carried away with me the esteem of the Senate, that of Cardinal Rezzonico (now pope), the love of the people, and a well-established regard throughout Italy, which still lasts in spite of my dismissal and exile.

In Parma I obtained not only the kindness, but the friendship of Madame Infanta, and in Turin the King of Sardinia, the Duc de Savoie, and the ministers of that Court overwhelmed me with civilities.

I was received by the king at Versailles (June, 1755) with kindness and familiarity; by the royal family as the friend of the Infanta, for that is the title she did me the honour to give me; by M. Rouillé and the other ministers as a favourite to whom they could not deny some merit; by Mme. de Pompadour as an intimate friend from whom she expected consolation and advice. But, as I had foreseen, they were a good deal embarrassed at having five months earlier urged my return; M. de Duras had mended matters, and the whole Council, which in January had unanimously thought that I ought to be sent to Spain, had changed its opinion. The king alone, as I learned from Mme. de Pompadour, was firmly resolved to make me succeed M. de Duras.

After viewing the scene, I decided to ask to return to Italy in August. Mme. de Pompadour opposed my resolution for a long time, but yielded at last to the good reasons I gave her. I could not, in fact, prolong my stay at Versailles without exciting a jealousy against me that was dangerous. M. Rouillé, a sufficiently honest man, who was not treacherous

to me, and who even did me justice, was too narrow-minded not to be jealous. M. de Machault had put him in the Foreign Office because it suited him to have the navy himself, but M. Rouillé was not in the least suited to deal with the cabinets of Europe. This minister said to me, "I shall never cease to say that you are the best ambassador employed, even though you should be my successor." I saw, besides, that M. de Machault, the Prince de Soubise, and other particular friends of Mme. de Pompadour viewed with an evil eye the preference she gave me over them on all occasions. The royal family treated me with kindness and distinction; Mme. de Pompadour congratulated me upon it, but it was easy to foresee that it might make her anxious; though, to tell the truth, nothing better could happen to her than to have her friend in the confidence of the king's family. It was for this purpose that I reconciled her with Madame Infanta.

That which alarmed me most was to see France on the point of going to war with England, and consequently with a part of Europe, without being aware of it or taking any effectual means either to avoid that war or to sustain it. I considered with the same terror that three years in my embassy had made me regarded as the ablest minister of the king and his greatest resource; which proved the paucity of men; and I could not doubt that as soon as they found themselves in difficulties they would keep me at Court, and fasten me to public affairs. This was what I dreaded most. In a foreign country I was certain of the success of my ministry, because I had the entire confidence of my Court, and could always be sure of my means. But it was not the same at Versailles, where I had against me the jealousy of all the ministers and all the courtiers. A single misunderstanding with Mme. de Pompadour might ruin me hopelessly; I

knew how easy it is, in matters of influence, to get embroiled with friends, especially female friends.

All these considerations determined me to fix the date of my departure for Venice as the 12th of August. I got the king to sanction my determination, and I obtained from him the permission to make it public. As soon as people were informed of it I saw joy sparkling on the faces of the ministers and courtiers, with an air of serenity which showed me that I had done wisely. But Providence (for I cannot otherwise explain what happened soon after) decided otherwise.

Before returning to Venice I wished to secure my means of living. The abbey of Saint-Arnould of Metz had become vacant. I asked for it and received it instantly with all the graciousness in the world on the part of the Bishop of Mirepoix; the salary of my embassy was increased; a sum was fixed to pay for my public entry into Venice; I was again assured of the first vacant place as councillor of State for the Church, and the king had the kindness to promise me the *cordon bleu* as soon as I received my appointment to the Spanish embassy. If I had been more grasping I could have had more, for at that time Mme. de Pompadour loved me sincerely, I pleased the king and his family, and the ministers would have consented to anything to get me away; no situation was ever more brilliant or more dangerous.

The king had caused the cessation, for a time, of the internal troubles of the kingdom by recalling, without conditions, the parliament which he had exiled to Soissons, and by enregistering an edict containing a law of absolute silence on the disputes which had risen over the bull Unigenitus. The recall of parliament without submission on its part could not fail to give it fresh strength, and, on the

other hand, the law of silence, very wise in itself, had the inconvenience of being easier to propose than to enforce; besides which, the enforcement of the law being in the hands of parliament, it was making one party the judge, and could, of course, reduce to silence none but the bullists.

External peace was no better secured than that within the nation. The Duc de Mirepoix, the king's ambassador in England, had let himself be amused by the ministers in London. This was not surprising. The Duc de Mirepoix was virtuous, but shallow; what was surprising is that the king's Council trusted to the statements of such an ambassador; and that it should have been believed at Versailles that the Court of London was pacific, when all Europe saw clearly that it was about to declare war upon us.

The king had no other basis for his political system than his alliance with the King of Prussia, who was distrusted with good reason, and for sole maxim the desire to preserve peace as long as possible. But it is well known that a State which excites the jealousy of its neighbours can preserve peace only by a good internal and external administration; in other words, when it is in a condition to defend itself and to attack.

The finances of the kingdom, which were then governed by M. de Séchelles, a man of intelligence but worn-out, had only an appearance of good administration; for, since the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle the State had spent every year far more than its revenues; the burdens on the people were not diminished; and all the money of the kingdom was virtually in the hands of the financiers. Commerce was flourishing, but without support from the navy. We had many hulks, and few vessels. Our militia, though numerous, was neither well composed nor well disciplined; and our frontier forts, ill-provided and out of repair, completed a

very sad picture of the state of France. In the Council, no union; open war between M. d'Argenson and M. de Machault; unbridled license in proposals, no subordination established; the Prince de Conti having an almost universal department, yet not a minister; Mme. de Pompadour openly at war with that prince; the king holding the balance in the midst of these divisions; overflowing luxury of the most scandalous nature; the people poverty-stricken; no true enlightenment in the Council; no citizen courage at the Court; no generals by land or sea on the eve of war.

Such were the threatening sights that came before me on my return from Venice.[1]

[1] This brief statement tallies exactly with the Marquis d'Argenson's bitter complaints and details. The two men were as wide apart as the poles in temperament, in their methods of dealing with men and things, in their judgment also on many points; but they were both *honest men*, with eyes and minds to see the truth and state it. — TR.

V.

1755. — The Situation of Mme. de Pompadour in 1755. — Capture of the Vessels "Alcide" and "Lys." — My Appointment to the Spanish Embassy. — Secret Proposals of the Court of Vienna, September, 1755. — My first Conference with the Austrian Ambassador. — Account rendered by me to the King of the Memorial of Vienna. — Continuation of the Negotiations. — First Secret Committee on the Vienna affair. — Affairs of Vienna, Berlin, and Dresden. — My own Position.

On arriving from Venice, I found Mme. de Pompadour in a very different position from that in which I had left her; she was no longer the woman environed with all charming talents, who governed France from a centre of pleasures. The king had ceased for some years to feel passion for her; nothing remained in him but friendship, confidence, and that bond of habit which, in princes, is the strongest of all ties. Mme. de Pompadour needed consolation; she saw me return with the liveliest joy. I was her tried friend; I had acquired a rather high reputation, which she regarded as her work. She did not delay opening her heart to me and uncovering all its wounds. She told me of the king's intrigue with Mme. de Choiseul, who, one year earlier, had died in child-bed; she told me how Mme d'Estrades, instigated by M. d'Argenson, had conducted that intrigue with the basest ingratitude. She related to me the manner in which she had been able to convict the king of his unfaithfulness to her, which he denied. The Comte de Stainville (now Duc de Choiseul) had made himself master of certain letters written by the king to his cousin, Mme. de Choiseul; these he gave to Mme. de Pompadour, who took them to the king.

So important a service, and one so dangerous to render, produced the effect which the Comte de Stainville expected. He had no trouble in persuading Mme. de Pompadour that a feeling stronger even than love had led him to risk all to be useful to her. Mme. de Pompadour felt, like a grateful woman, the importance of this service; from that moment she changed to friendship a species of aversion she had always felt to M. de Stainville; her heart, naturally kind and feeling, was touched by the danger he had run to do her service; she made him her friend. For justice should be done to Mme. de Pompadour; all the coquetry which people attribute to her is honestly in the mind; her heart is not susceptible of it. Not only did she save the Comte de Stainville from the king's anger, but she got him appointed to the embassy of Rome, not being able to obtain for him that of Turin, which he desired, and which M. de Saint-Contest made haste to give to M. Chauvelin. Such was the origin of the great fortunes of the Duc de Choiseul.

I found Mme. de Pompadour much disgusted with the Court. She showed me copies of letters that she had written to the king to obtain permission to retire from it; nor did she make a mystery to me of those she wrote to him on public matters. The first convinced me that she was only filled with anger and disgust, and I did not find in them a firm resolution to quit the world; the second, on the contrary, seemed to me admirable. I advised her to change the tone of the first letters, which were certain in the end to weary the king, and to remain at Court, from which she was not really detached, and where she could be useful. This advice was given without any risk of wounding virtue, for the tie between Mme. de Pompadour and the king was now pure, and without danger to either. There was only

the scandal to avoid. I shall have occasion later to tell the means I suggested to the king to escape that evil.

With regard to the letters Mme. de Pompadour had written for the improvement of public affairs, I should never have supposed her capable of telling the truth to the king with such energy, and even eloquence. I loved her the better, and esteemed her the more for them. I exhorted her not to weaken that style, but to continue to tell the truth with force and courage.

I made her feel that she had acted unwisely in the jealousy she had shown of the Prince de Conti; that the more she insisted on keeping him at a distance, the more she risked encountering the resistance of the king; that in acting with greater moderation, and less temper, her representations would have much greater weight; and, in short, that there was but one thing to say to the king about the Prince de Conti: "If you wish to charge him with your affairs put him into the Council; if you have not confidence enough in him to give him that place, give back to your ministers the management of those affairs which the prince has usurped." Mme. de Pompadour followed my advice in this respect, and found the benefit of it. The king soon after gave to me the affair of the parliament, and the Prince de Conti worked no longer with his Majesty.

I was not less fortunate in persuading Mme. de Pompadour that she ought to banish temper and bitterness in her intercourse with the king; that she no longer had the right to be jealous; and that all her attention should be confined to making her society amiable and agreeable to the king, in order to make her advice more useful. I pictured to her the condition of the kingdom, the disorder of the finances, the universal insubordination, and the loss of the king's authority. I made her feel how fatal the quarrel between

M. de Machault and M. d'Argenson had been to the State; I urged her to make up her own quarrel with Comte d'Argenson, and to sacrifice to the public good her personal resentments. She yielded, with some difficulty, to my advice; but at last she charged me with the negotiation, to which M. d'Argenson steadily refused to agree, not only at the time I now spoke to him, but some time later, before his dismissal.

M. d'Argenson made the mistake of nearly all ministers who have been well treated by their master. They think they have need of no one, and they imagine that when their enemies wish to be reconciled, it is because they are frightened, because their position is bad, and therefore that it would be very stupid to prevent their fall.

It can now be seen from what I have said how much Mme. de Pompadour had need in those days of the counsels of a friend "honest man." It will be seen in the sequel that this was not the only occasion on which I did her important services, and that if she contributed to my fortune and my elevation, I acquitted myself towards her, not only as a sensible friend, but also as a courageous man who knew how to sacrifice all to friendship and gratitude.

I followed the king to Compiègne; the foreign ministers, seeing my favour, paid me more assiduous court than they did to the minister of Foreign Affairs; I was the depositary of the complaints they made against M. Rouillé, whose incapacity and arrogance revolted them. The Baron de Knyphausen, minister plenipotentiary of the King of Prussia, never left me; he tried to persuade me that I was the only minister of the king to whom he could speak, and the only one in whom his master had confidence. He represented to me in vivid colours the blindness of my Court, which, without being aware of it, was on the verge of war with

England and her allies. He complained that our ministry would take no measures in common with his master, who was thus left exposed to attack; he insisted that we ought to forestall our enemies, and declared that if the king would enter the Low Countries, his master was ready to enter Bohemia at the head of 140,000 men. These confidences, which he professed to make in the greatest secrecy, were faithfully reported by me to the king; but I was much surprised to learn that what M. de Knyphausen whispered in my ear he was proclaiming on the house-tops. This affectation seemed to me suspicious; and it will be seen that I was not mistaken.

It was under these circumstances that we heard of the unexpected attack on our squadron by the English off the banks of Newfoundland, and the capture of the frigates "Alcide" and "Lys," without any previous declaration of war. All persons of good sense saw that a naval war was certain, and that a land war must soon follow. But the majority of the king's Council absolutely persisted in thinking that war with England could be avoided by mildly complaining of their proceeding and making no reprisals. It was then that two contrary opinions rose violently in the Council. The Comte d'Argenson and all the military regarded the aggression of the English as the first step in a scheme long meditated and agreed upon by all the allies of England; and that consequently that scheme should be frustrated by seizing the Austrian Low Countries. M. Rouillé, minister of Foreign Affairs accepted that opinion and supported it by memorials, to which M. de Machault and the rest of the Council replied by contradictory memorials. I was far, indeed, from thinking then that I should be the instrument used by the king to unite him with the empress, and as I was firmly convinced that England had not taken this overt step without a previous

understanding with Austria, her ally, I insisted strongly on the necessity of breaking up this dangerous concert of our enemies.

This pen war soon became indecent, because each side, in order to make partisans, communicated its memorials, thus divulging to the public the secrets of State. All the Court, not excepting the women, hotly supported either one side or the other; the military came in crowds to Compiègne asking to serve. What a sight for the foreign ambassadors then assembled at Court, to see the gravest and most serious affairs talked of as if at a café! This question, so important for the State, excited such warmth solely because of the personal interest taken in it by the two chief ministers. M. d'Argenson desired a land war to render his ministry brilliant; M. de Machault, on the contrary, desired that the war be confined to the navy for reasons equally personal. But it was not a question of the respective interests of these two ministers when the good and glory of the State had to be decided on. A council was held, at which the Maréchal de Noailles, who had been absent for some days, appeared. The course was taken of taking none; of negotiating with England, preparing slowly for a sea-war, and leaving our ports open to the English while the latter were seizing our merchant-vessels. With regard to the invasion of the Low Countries, that was also rejected.

It was under these circumstances that M. de Knyphausen renewed his declamations with an indecency and publicity unparalleled; and one day when he spoke to me with more heat than usual I could not help saying to him: "If I were minister of Foreign Affairs here is what I should think of the vehemence with which you preach the double invasion of the Low Countries and Bohemia. I should believe that your master wants to involve us for his own interests in a

war with Austria, and that if the offer that he makes us is refused, he will consider himself quits with us and will, perhaps, make arrangements with our enemies, under pretext of shielding himself." I was a prophet without knowing it. The King of Prussia was then beginning a negotiation with England by means of the Duke of Brunswick; but we knew nothing of that.

Some time after this conversation, M. de Knyphausen changed his tone and language. He praised the pacific system of the king, and agreed that the interests of France required her to keep to a sea-war only. He even offered me, from his master, plans which he thought infallible for humiliating England. This contrast confirmed my suspicions; I no longer doubted that the King of Prussia was escaping us. I communicated my ideas to the ministry, but, with the exception of the king and, perhaps, M. de Machault, the whole Council was Prussian. Nevertheless, by dint of insisting to Mme. de Pompadour on the danger there was in not knowing exactly what to look for from the King of Prussia, it was resolved (after some months) to send the Duc de Nivernais to Berlin.

The only measure that was taken to support the war was that of searching for money. It was simple enough to re-establish the *dixième*, but M. de Machault obstinately insisted that the king should, by declaration, re-establish the two *vingtièmes*. The *dixième* would have been equally productive and would not have made the people fear that one *vingtième* would be kept on after the war. Parliament made representations that were not listened to; heads grew heated, and the fermentation in the parliaments, which had scarcely subsided, began again with more indecency and uproar than ever. The king was obliged to register his declaration at a *lit de justice* held at Versailles. M. de

Maupeou, the chief-president, addressed the king in a speech that, to say the least, was bold; the two *vingtièmes* were established with much difficulty, discredit for authority, and great murmurs on the part of the people.

I groaned deeply at the species of paralysis with which the government was attacked. I represented France to myself as a wounded man, but full of life, whose legs and arms were bound so as to compel him to lose blood and be helpless for vengeance. The ministers replied to all my representations with the popular proverb: *Rira bien qui rira le dernier.* This supposed, at least, that serious preparations were being made; but in reality all was sunk in torpor. This fatal lethargy excited my blood to the point of making me seriously ill; it was not the first nor the last time in my life that I have experienced that, for some souls, love of country is the strongest of all loves. I own, nevertheless, that such extreme sensibility is a defect in a minister; but it must also be said that it is not common, and that it presupposes the first of all virtues — love of the public welfare.

During my illness the king had the kindness to write me a note in which he promised to make me a commander of his Order the next time that promotions were made in my profession; that flattering mark of his kindness cured my fever, and redoubled the patriotic zeal that brought it on.

As soon as I recovered I thought of taking leave of the king and returning to Venice. I was much astonished when M. Rouillé, by order of the king, forbade me to start. I was then ignorant that the Duc de Duras, our ambassador in Spain, had presented, without being authorized to do so, a memorial which had greatly displeased the Court of Madrid. The king and Council thought it necessary to recall him and appoint some one in his place immediately. In the

month of January all the ministers had agreed in my favour to fill that post; but times were changed; they esteemed me then, and did not fear me; but now I excited an almost universal jealousy. Each minister proposed to the king his own protégé for the ministry to Spain, but his Majesty held firm; he thought that as I had had all the suffrage in January, I deserved in the month of August a preference over others.

Thus I owed the embassy to Spain to the firmness of the king, and perhaps, in part, to the friendship with which Madame Infanta honoured me; she had the greatest interests to be managed in Spain, and could count on no one as much as on me. It is true that I was the first minister who had made the king feel how improper it was that the fate of her husband the Infant, Duke of Parma, had not been settled by the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle.

The commission intrusted to me was as important as it was delicate. The Duc de Duras, out of zeal and from being too eager to establish a family compact between the king and King Ferdinand of Spain, had spoiled everything. He had given himself up to M. de l'Encenada, who was now overthrown; he was on bad terms with the Queen of Spain, and on still worse with M. Ricardo Wall, a minister of State, whom he represented in his despatches as sold to the English.

As soon as my appointment was made public, envy, which had not known where to bite me, used a means it had employed before when I went to Venice. It reprinted a collection of prose and verse which had appeared under my name in 1739, when I was in Auvergne; I had publicly disavowed it before my reception into the French Academy in 1744. In truth, that collection does not belong to me; the maimed writings of several living authors are inserted

in it; and the pieces of which I am really the writer are so altered and disfigured that I have the right to disavow them. A great number of copies of this collection were sent to Madrid, but people there thought, as in Italy, that if I was the author of it I had one talent more than other ministers. In spite of its poor success, this form of malice was renewed whenever it was hoped to injure me. I am very fortunate to have had no hidden wrong-doing; for its turpitude would have been quickly unveiled.

It was towards the end of this trip to Compiègne that Mme. d'Estrades, who owed everything to her cousin Mme. de Pompadour, was sent away from Court. She had been long at the head of the intrigues of Comte d'Argenson, and had guided that of his niece, Mme. de Choiseul.

I was making ready for my journey to Spain, on which I was to start in about a week, when, one evening after leaving M. Rouillé, I received a note from Mme. de Pompadour telling me to go to her the next morning at ten o'clock without fail. I saw that some urgent affair had come up, but I should never, in a thousand years, have imagined what it really was. I was there at the appointed hour. Mme. de Pompadour showed me a letter to her from Comte Staremberg, minister plenipotentiary of their Imperial Majesties, in which he asked Mme. de Pompadour for an interview for the purpose of giving her certain secret proposals with which he was charged by the Empress Maria Theresa. He asked at the same time that the king should select some one of his ministers to be present at this conference, who should be authorized to convey to his Majesty these proposals, and return the answer which the king might think proper to make. Nothing could equal the surprise that this letter caused me. A crowd of ideas came into my mind concerning the object of the Court of Vienna, and also about my

Maria Theresa
Empress.

Mau

own interests. At that first moment, I saw only a trap set for the king, and a very dangerous reef for my fortunes and my peace of mind. I asked Mme. de Pompadour if it was she who had proposed me to his Majesty for this confidence. She assured me she had not; saying that the king, of his own monition, had chosen me in preference to the other ministers, not only from the idea he had of my capacity, but because he knew the prejudices of his ministers against the Court of Vienna.

I then developed to Mme. de Pompadour all there was to fear in entering into a negotiation with the Court of Vienna, whether it was sincere, or whether it was only seeking to amuse us. In the first case, the king risked two things: first, the total change of his political system and that of Europe, which could not fail to upset all minds, and might produce a general concussion. I added that, in that first case, it could not be doubted that Austria would drag us into a war with the King of Prussia, and that a conflagration might become general from the fear felt by the Protestant princes at the union between the two great Catholic powers. I made her feel also that such a war, foreign to the interests of the nation, would displease all France; that the king had no tried generals fit to lead his armies, nor a treasury in sufficiently good condition to sustain the burden of a dual war by sea and land.

In the second case, the Court of Vienna, the enemy for the last three hundred years of that of France, had great interest in causing jealousy to our allies by feigned negotiations; so that we could without injustice suspect it of wishing to amuse us and so gain time to strengthen an alliance with England, Holland, Russia, and, perhaps, the King of Sardinia. I represented the danger there was of rendering the King of Prussia uneasy, and thus giving him a pretext

for unfaithfulness, in case France was left without allies; for Austria, having succeeded in detaching them from us, would not fail of pretexts herself to break off a specious and frivolous negotiation.

As I was ending these reflections, the king, to whom I had never yet spoken on public business, entered the room and asked me abruptly what I thought of M. de Staremberg's letter. I repeated to his Majesty what I had just said to Mme. de Pompadour. The king heard me with impatience, and when I ended he said, almost angrily, "You are like the rest — the enemy of the Queen of Hungary." I answered that no one admired that princess more than I did; that I knew she had sent Comte Kaunitz to Versailles to make a treaty of alliance with his Majesty; that I was not ignorant of a conversation the queen-empress had held with Blondel, our minister in Vienna; besides which I had heard it said that her father, Charles VI., had advised her on his deathbed to unite herself with France if she desired to keep her dominions; but that all these reasons could not prevent me from pausing on the two reflections I had just explained to his Majesty, and which I submitted to his judgment; moreover, his Majesty, would do well to consult those of his ministers in whom he had most confidence. "Well, then," said the king, with some emotion, "I may as well make a fine compliment to M. de Staremberg, and tell him he will not be listened to." "That is not my meaning, sire," I answered; "Your Majesty has everything to gain by learning the intentions of the Court of Vienna, but care must be taken as to the answer that is made." The king's face became more serene; he ordered me to listen to M. de Staremberg's proposals in presence of Mme. de Pompadour, who was to be present at the first conference only.

The empress exacted from the king, and promised him

in return, inviolable secrecy, in a form which I cannot repeat because it relates to the secret pledge they gave to each other. The empress also asked that no secretary be employed for the writings; and that when the king or the empress judged it best to admit one of their ministers to the secret they should give each other notice reciprocally. Thus for a long time there was no one at the Court of Vienna but the empress, the emperor, and Count Kaunitz who knew of this negotiation, and no one in France but the king, Mme. de Pompadour, and myself who knew of it; the intention of the empress being to negotiate as if she were tête à tête with the king. This singular system redoubled my fears and my suspicions. If I had been merely an ambitious man I should have seen the advantage of being alone in the confidence of my master, and having in my hands the thing he had most at heart; for the king did not conceal that what he had desired all his life was to have the Court of Vienna for his ally; that he believed it was the sole means of securing a long peace and maintaining the Catholic religion. This decided bias of the king did not prevent me from representing to him in the strongest manner that it was necessary I should be aided and advised by his minister for Foreign Affairs, or by such other member of the Council as his Majesty might think proper to select. My urgency was in vain; all that I could obtain was a promise the king gave me to think of it after the negotiation had begun to take a serious form.

Seeing the king inflexible, I asked him for a power written by his own hand authorizing me to listen to M. de Staremberg and answer him in the king's name; with a formal order to me to report to his Majesty alone what took place at these conferences. I also obtained from the king that he would approve with his own hand the answers

and memorials that I should give in his name to M. de Staremberg, — a wise precaution which I did not relinquish throughout the course of this long negotiation. The king ordered me to draw up the form of power that I wanted; I wrote it under his eye; he took the minute, carried it to his cabinet, and fifteen minutes later brought the power back to me, written and signed in due form by the royal hand. I never saw as much satisfaction and serenity on the king's face as I observed at that moment. He ordered me to make an appointment with M. de Staremberg for the next day, in order to arrange with him the day and place of the first conference.

A moment later the king went away to attend the Council. I remained alone with Mme. de Pompadour, who told me that M. de Kaunitz, during his embassy, had frequently solicited her to bring the king to agree to the desire the empress had to ally herself with France; that the king had always wished for this alliance, from his friendship and esteem for the empress, from motives of religion, and also from the little confidence he felt in the King of Prussia, who had shown him much unfaithfulness and might show him more. I comprehended, from what was said to me, that the alliance with the King of Prussia weighed upon the king, as much on account of the difference in religion as because of the little circumspection with which the King of Prussia had talked about his government and other matters personal to the king.

I made Mme. de Pompadour feel that all these motives must be made to harmonize with prudence and the good of the State; I congratulated her on the flattering confidence shown to her by the Court of Vienna, and on the certainty that her position would become the firmer and her favour the more assured by her being so closely allied to an affair of such

great importance. For myself, I showed her only regret at being charged with this affair; it is true that I saw in this negotiation too great an embarkation for France, and for me a dangerous commission, which, though raising me very high, might fling me down into disgrace. Mme. de Pompadour reassured me on the liking the king had for me, and the confidence with which he honoured me. In spite of that, I told her I should act in the matter with the same precautions as if I expected to be arrested in three months. I do not believe in presentiments, but I trust to my first *coup d'œil;* it has never deceived me.

The king returned from the Council and had the goodness to tell me that he had sounded two of the ministers in a very adroit and guarded manner on the objections I had made as to the danger of negotiating with Vienna under present circumstances. "You will be pleased," he added, "for they thought as you do." I saw that this conformity of opinion increased his confidence in my advice. From that time he treated me with a kindness and familiarity which showed that he was much at his ease with me,— a condition which greatly diminished the awe he always inspired in me.

In conformity with the king's orders I went to see M. de Staremberg to tell him I had been chosen to treat with him. He assured me he had never doubted that the choice would fall on me; he seemed very glad of it, and we talked of the reciprocal desire our sovereigns had to unite themselves by the ties of sincere friendship. We fixed the first conference for the next day, in a little house at the lower end of the Bellevue terrace, where we were to go from different directions, after sending away our servants and carriages. I shall say here, in passing, that my meetings with M. de Staremberg were so secret that for more than six months the foreign ministers never suspected our intercourse.

1901.

I was the last to arrive at Bellevue. M. de Staremberg read his memorial. I had agreed with Mme. de Pompadour (who was present at this first conference) that while M. de Staremberg was explaining the proposals of the Court of Vienna we should not betray our thoughts by look or gesture; the precaution was wise, for M. de Staremberg did not read a line without searching in our eyes for the impression made upon us. I own that nothing ever surprised me more than the way the empress took to propose her alliance to the king; she supposed him displeased with the King of Prussia and aware of the latter's negotiations with the English Court, — a circumstance which was until that moment entirely unknown to the Court of Versailles. The empress, instead of using by-ways and craft, imparted her views to the king with the utmost frankness, proposing to his Majesty advantages which would, of necessity, interest his heart, and an extensive plan about which I am not at liberty to speak.

After the reading of the memorial, M. de Staremberg dictated it to me, word for word, and collated my copy. We separated without any signs of approval or disapproval. Mme. de Pompadour had withdrawn after the reading of the memorial. I was left with M. de Staremberg, and from him I heard several particulars which I reported to the king. I am able to state only one: the Court of Vienna had long hesitated whether to address itself to Mme. de Pompadour or to the Prince de Conti as the means of making its proposals to the king. MM. de Kaunitz and de Staremberg turned the scales in favour of Mme. de Pompadour.

The memorial of the Court of Vienna informed us of the negotiations of the King of Prussia with England; that knowledge was the first advantage we gained from the memorial. Secondly, the Court of Vienna told us its secret intentions, without knowing whether we would tell ours; and

though the result justified the boldness of this step, I have always wondered that M. de Kaunitz advised it. The plan proposed to the king was the work of M. de Kaunitz. It was large, perhaps too vast, too complicated; but it presented objects of real interest to France, means of securing the peace of Europe on solid foundations, and some matters capable of moving the affectionate and paternal heart of the king in respect to his children and grandchildren; my duty does not allow me to say more.

After reflecting carefully over this plan thus proposed, I felt that the king ought to answer with much circumspection overtures so important and so unexpected. I drew up the answer that I thought ought to be made, and went to Choisy to submit it to the king. I made his Majesty feel, in the account I gave him of the first conference, that the reflections I had previously made to him on the danger of this negotiation were just. The king approved the plan of conduct I suggested to him to avoid the rocks on which this great affair might cast us.

The king answered the Court of Vienna in the memorial as I had written it, approved in his own handwriting, saying: that nothing could be more agreeable to him than to unite himself with the empress by the ties of unalterable friendship and an eternal alliance, but that, faithful himself to his friends, he could not suspect their sincerity, still less take any measure which could be adverse to them; that his whole desire was to maintain the peace sworn at Aix-la-Chapelle, and that if the empress judged it well to work in concert with him for so salutary an object his Majesty was all ready to concur.

This answer had no drawback for us; the king played a fine rôle; the empress might certainly regret having advanced so far; but that was precisely what removed all fear that she

would take part with our enemies before she knew exactly what to expect from France.

The king, in spite of his extreme desire to unite himself at once with the empress, felt and approved the wisdom of this answer and the plan of negotiation it suggested. I saw that his confidence in me increased; in fact, from that day the king never opposed any of my projects nor any of my memorials. This indulgence on his part redoubled the fear I had in being intrusted alone, and without help from the ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a negotiation so important in itself and in its possible consequences. I again made earnest requests that the Council of the king, the whole or a part, might be informed of my commission and told to enlighten my work. My efforts were useless, and it was not until six weeks later that I obtained the king's permission to have conferences with four of the ministers, as I shall presently relate. If I had been more ambitious than wise I should, after representing to the king the necessity of my being aided by the advice of his ministers, have yielded to his repugnance and remained sole master of a most important State affair, obtaining easily the power and influence necessary to direct and terminate it. But, as I have already remarked, I feared the results of the negotiation, both for the kingdom and for myself.

One of the principal points in the plan of conduct I proposed to the king was the sending to the King of Prussia an enlightened minister who could fathom the sentiments of that king and, so to speak, feel his pulse and discover his true intentions at the moment when war was imminent between France and England. The minister was also to be charged to clear up the suspicions the Court of Vienna had given us as to the negotiations of the King of Prussia with the English through the Duke of Brunswick; in this way the king would

avoid the double risk of suspecting a faithful ally or of being the dupe of a perfidious friend. Moreover, a knowledge of the sentiments of the King of Prussia was necessary to extend or contract the arrangements that we might make with the Court of Vienna; for if it was true that the King of Prussia was abandoning us, the king would be without allies, and he must either unite himself to the Court of Vienna or run the risk of being exposed to a league of all the great powers of Europe. These reasons struck the king's mind, and soon after the Duke de Nivernais, a well-informed man of a wise and enlightened mind, was chosen to go to Berlin.

I expected that the Comte de Staremberg would not be satisfied with the reserved reply I had orders to transmit to him; he did not conceal from me either his surprise or his vexation; but he finally copied the king's reply from my dictation and sent the letter the next day by a courier, whom the Court of Vienna sent back without delay. M. de Staremberg notified me of his arrival and communicated the reply of his Court, which, without being harsh, was cold and laconic. The empress renounced the plan she had proposed, as it was not to the taste of the king, and would wait for his Majesty to explain the objects which might serve as a basis for the two Courts to take common action.

I soon remitted to M. de Staremberg a second reply from the king, in which I studied to remove the fears and umbrage which our reserve had roused in the Court of Vienna. That first impression did not begin to fade for more than six weeks, and after many replies and responses from the two Courts. I then perceived that it was possible to detach the empress from her alliance with England, and that by binding the King of Prussia not to break the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, the peace of the continent could be secured; the king would then have no other burden to support than that of the war he

was about to have with England. That prospect, happy for France and for Europe, dispersed my anxieties, inspired my work, and warmed my zeal.

I conceived then the project of a treaty of reciprocal guarantee between the States of the king in Europe and those of the empress-queen, to which their respective allies should be invited to accede, with the exception of England; this last point would of course be difficult to obtain. I drew up the articles of this treaty of union and guarantee. The king approved them, and felt how fortunate he would be if the work could be thus terminated; it would be the means of securing the peace of Europe during his reign and that of the empress. His Majesty authorized me to make the first overtures of this salutary plan to the empress's minister. The memorial which I gave him was welcomed fairly well in Vienna; the empress had in fact advanced too far to venture on making no agreement with us. She answered that she would authorize her minister to discuss with me the different points of this treaty of union and guarantee.

In this condition of things, the negotiation taking a more serious turn, I was unwilling any longer to be the sole person charged with an affair so important. I represented to the king that in spite of all my attention I was liable to make considerable mistakes, not being informed of what was happening in the different cabinets of Europe, whereas M. de Staremberg was aided by all the lights of his Court; that the game was not equal, and that no earthly inducement would make me involve the king in such serious engagements unless I were enlightened by his ministers. I asked him therefore to appoint such members of his Council as he judged suitable, to whom I could render an account, in committee, of what had passed up to this time with the Court of Vienna, and of the negotiation now opened.

The king yielded with difficulty to my request; but finally he chose, to confer with me, M. de Machault, then secretary of State for the navy, M. de Séchelles, controller-general of finances, M. Rouillé, minister of Foreign Affairs, and M. Saint-Florentin, minister of State. I expressed some surprise that M. d'Argenson, minister of war, was not admitted to this secret committee; the king told me that when the affair was further advanced he would be called into it as well as the other members of the Council.

The surprise of the ministers of the king whom I have just named can be imagined when I told them what had happened since the month of November. M. de Machault and, above all, M. Rouillé could only imperfectly conceal their vexation. The Comte de Saint-Florentin was the only one who expressed any joy at seeing me in the confidence of the sovereign. I showed them my order and power from the king to negotiate with M. de Staremberg, and all the memorials sent to the Court of Vienna, approved in the hand-writing of his Majesty. It was agreed between us that in future, before treating with the Austrian minister, and before presenting to the king any memorial relative to the negotiation, I should, each time, explain to the committee the object of my conference, and the subject of my memorial. This system was constantly followed throughout the whole course of the negotiation; I wished the latter to be regarded, not as my own work, but as that of the king and his Council; it was the only way to shelter myself from possible events.

It is easy to understand now the excessive labour this involved. I wrote with my own hand, under M. de Staremberg's dictation, the answers and memorials sent by his Court, of which I made a copy for the minister of Foreign Affairs; I did the same for the replies and memorials

returned in the king's name; besides this, I composed and made minutes of all the projects and counter-projects relating to treaties and conventions; at each difficulty I was forced to write memorials to explain matters; and when the king was absent from Versailles, and the Council dispersed, I was obliged to write detailed despatches to all the members of the committee. For this immense labour I was not allowed to employ a secretary from the month of September, 1755, until the month of March, 1757, at which time my health totally broke down. To preserve the secret of this negotiation, I was obliged to give myself up to society, and to lead the life of a man who has nothing to do; I was therefore compelled to spend my nights in work. Add to these fatigues of the body the anxieties of a man who excites the jealousy of all the king's Council; the perpetual watchfulness necessary to avoid the snares laid for me in all directions, and the spies which the foreign ministers and those of the king not admitted to the committee set upon me; a picture will thus be had of a situation which I am now astonished that I was able to resist. I am not less surprised that the secret of the affair confided to me has never transpired.

The king, at my entreaty, had sent the Duc de Nivernais to Berlin. The King of Prussia neglected nothing to cajole that minister, who, ignorant of our negotiations with the Court of Vienna, was strongly of opinion that the king ought to renew his treaty with Prussia. That king testified to the duke the greatest attachment to France, and excessive fear of the treaty of subsidies which England had just concluded with Russia for the payment of eighty thousand men [signed in Petersburg, September 30, 1755]. This alarm of the King of Prussia was reasonable enough, but he exaggerated it to give himself an excuse in our eyes for

the convention he had just signed with the English Court. It was not until February, 1756, that his Prussian Majesty admitted this arrangement plainly to the Duc de Nivernais. He then showed him the treaty, signed by his minister in London, and in spite of the Duc de Nivernais' solicitations, he ratified it before his very eyes, offering at the same time to renew his treaty with us; thus contracting at the same time with two powers at enmity, which had an appearance of veritable derision.

When I was consulted as to this renewal of alliance with the King of Prussia, I said distinctly that it ought to be done, provided the King of Prussia would abrogate his convention with England; for it could not be permitted that he should sign a treaty with his right hand with England, and one with his left hand with us. This opinion was that of the committee also, and the king adopted it. The Duc de Nivernais was, in consequence, written to, and recalled after making vain efforts to induce the King of Prussia to break his treaty with the Court of London. M. de Nivernais was ignorant of our negotiations with the Court of Vienna. I must not forget to mention here that the King of Prussia said to him, when he reproached his Majesty for concluding a treaty with England without our knowledge: "Here you are, very angry; why don't you make a treaty with the empress? I should have no objections." He was reminded of this remark when the Treaty of Versailles was communicated to him.

As soon as I saw that we could no longer count on the King of Prussia I made every effort to induce the Council of the king, especially M. Rouillé, to grant a subsidy to the King of Poland, Elector of Saxony, in order to oblige that prince to maintain an army of fifty thousand men, and secure Saxony against an invasion by the King of Prussia.

The Comte de Broglie, our ambassador in Dresden, vehemently solicited this treaty of subsidy. M. Rouillé was rather inclined to it, but MM. de Machault and de Séchelles opposed it strongly. In vain I represented that as soon as the King of Prussia knew of our relations with the empress he would not fail to attack Bohemia unexpectedly, and take possession of the Electorate of Saxony. They answered that I did not know the King of Prussia; that, bold as he seemed, he would die of fear the moment he saw that we had allied ourselves to the Court of Vienna; that he could not do anything without us; and would think himself very lucky if we did not attack him. Can it be believed that the Council of the greatest king in Europe could have judged so falsely of the King of Prussia? This bad judgment was the cause of all the evils of the present war. I shall often have occasion to refer to it. No doubt persons will be amazed that the king, having more confidence in me as to foreign affairs than in any other of his ministers, should not have followed my opinion on a point so essential; but I was alone against many, and people count votes more than they weigh them.

We shall see, in the end, on how many important occasions my opinion on public affairs was opposed and neglected. I had been chosen as the architect of a great work, but I was never master of its guidance, and the choice of means and workmen often depended on persons the most opposed to the system the king had undertaken to carry out. Will it be believed that during our two years' negotiations with the Court of Vienna, M. Rouillé, minister of Foreign Affairs, was never willing to communicate to me what was going on in the Courts of Germany and the North, and that he limited all my information to letters which arrived from Madrid, on the pretext that I was only the ambassador to

Spain. Not only did he refuse me lights which were necessary to negotiate advantageously with M. de Staremberg, but he often gave instructions to the king's ministers in Germany that were very contrary to the language that I held to the ministers of the empress, so that complaints and distrust were continual from the Court of Vienna.

The king was informed of conduct so extraordinary and so prejudicial to his interests; he groaned over it; but M. Rouillé was old and infirm, the king knew his jealousy and his weaknesses, and, by excess of kindness, he would not mortify him by commanding him to open to me the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. To conciliate his interests with his kindness, and in order that I should be fully informed of what it was so important for me to know, it will presently be seen that the king appointed me to his Council; the same motive subsequently determined his Majesty to make me minister of Foreign Affairs in 1758. Thus it was to the jealousy of M. Rouillé, and not to the favour I enjoyed, that I owed these two important positions. The intention of the king was not to let me occupy them until after my return from my embassies to Madrid and Vienna. I am assured of this fact by a letter from the king to Madame Infanta which she communicated to me at Versailles.

Paris-Duvernoy

VI.

1755–1756. — The Affair of the Requisition, and that of Minorca. — Continuation of Negotiations with Vienna. — The Treaty of Versailles. — Publication of the Treaty in July, 1756. — Negotiations with the Court of Vienna. — The King of Prussia assembles his Forces and threatens an Invasion of Saxony and Bohemia.

I FELT certain from the cautious treatment shown by our ministers to England that some sort of negotiation had suspended the activity of the government in France; but I had no certainty of this fact when, dining one day with the Marquis de Puysieux, I found there the speech with which the King of England had just opened his parliament. In it he said: "With a sincere desire to secure my people from the evils of war and to prevent, in the midst of present troubles, whatever could lead to a general war in Europe, I have been ever ready to accept all honourable and reasonable terms of agreement; but up to this time France has proposed none. Consequently I have limited my views to preventing that power from making further usurpations or maintaining those it has already made; to letting it be known distinctly that we have the right to demand satisfaction for hostilities committed in a time of profound peace; and to bringing to nought designs which, as various appearances and many preparations give reason to believe, are now being formed against my kingdom and my domains."

This speech left no uncertainty as to the intentions of the Britannic Court, and it was plain we could no longer reasonably expect to be at peace with that power. A means presented itself to my mind of bringing the Council

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at Versailles to ask an explanation from the English ministry. This means justified at the same time the king's inaction, not only in the eyes of his subjects oppressed by the English, but also in the face of all Europe, and threw back the odium of the war on the Britannic Court; in short, it furnished the king with a means of revenge both useful and honourable. I went at once into my cabinet where I drew up a first memorial (which will be found among my papers).

Before speaking to the king of my great project, I wanted to make sure that means could be found to execute it. I went to see M. Pâris-Duverney, intendant-general of military subsistence, a man of genius and resources, who has ideas in his mind and loftiness in his soul. I read him my memorial; he seized at once and admirably the full extent of the plan, and the political and military bearings of the double project it presented. M. Duverney assured me that the subsistence side of the affair could be ready in three weeks, and that his brother, M. Pâris-Montmartel would furnish the necessary money. We went together to see the latter, who applauded no less than his brother the contents of my memorial; he promised that the money should not be wanting as soon as the king had given his orders. M. Montmartel has enriched himself in serving the king; but it must be said that his fortune and his credit have both been useful to the State on several important occasions.

We agreed, all three, that my memorial should be communicated on the following day to his Majesty. In the interval, M. Duverney sent me a very clear and strong statement of the means to employ to make sure of the supplies and munitions necessary to the success of the enterprise. After having taken these precautions I went

back to Versailles, and gave my memorial to the king, assuring him that if he adopted my project, neither the money nor the other means would be lacking.

The king has a naturally sound mind. He liked the plan; but he wished before adopting it to have it approved by the Council, and, in consequence, he ordered a committee, at which all the ministers should be present.

My project consisted in making to the Court of London a Requisition, by which the king declared that, to avoid the evils of war, he would willingly forget the insult offered to his flag by the irregular capture of the "Alcide," and the "Lys," and by the still less excusable carrying off of the merchant-vessels of his subjects, on condition that England would restore at once and without reserve the said vessels; also that if his Britannic Majesty accepted a proposition so equitable, his Majesty was ready to renew the negotiation, now interrupted, for the settlement of the North American boundaries; but that if, on the contrary, the King of England refused so just and amicable an overture, his Majesty would regard that refusal as an open declaration of war.

This Requisition [published in the "Gazette de France," 1756] was to be accompanied by a letter from the minister of Foreign Affairs, to Mr. Fox, and sent through the king's ambassador at the Hague to Mr. York, Britannic minister in Holland, for transmission to his Court; the answer to be returned to our ambassador. At the same time copies of the Requisition were to be sent to all the Courts of Europe, to let them see the moderation and equity of the king. But as this step towards the Court of London was threatening in case of a refusal, the threat was not to be lost in air, and I supported it by a detailed plan for attacking Minorca. The Requisition was but the preamble of that means of vengeance, and the two things were so bound together that

my plan involved renouncing the Requisition, if the attack on Minorca was not practicable. In case the attack on Minorca was determined on, I wanted that all arrangements to begin that enterprise should be completed by the time the answer came from London; so that there might be no interval between the refusal of England and the attack on the island.

All the king's Council, with the exception of M. de Machault, praised this project very much, as a whole and in parts. As for the Keeper of Seals [M. de Machault], he contented himself by saying coldly: "That Requisition will give us war." M. de Séchelles, who rolled his *r*'s, said, stamping his foot, "Eh! *jarni*, monsieur, is n't it war already?" M. de Machault knew that well enough, but he saw that the attack on Minorca would give M. d'Argenson a rôle to play, and that displeased him. Moreover, M. de Machault was in the confidence of an underhand negotiation, with which the Court of London had been for some time amusing us; a banker in Paris being the negotiator. When the king ordered M. Rouillé to disclose to me that mystery, I was immensely surprised that the ministers should have given attention to so clumsy a trick. I soon made the king feel the indecency, danger, and uselessness of such a negotiation.

Though the king's Council adopted my project, it was not without much difficulty and effort that I succeeded in getting it executed. I wrote many memorials on the subject, to develop the plan and facilitate its execution. I asked that the king should appoint a general of reputation to command on our ocean coasts, and another on the coasts of the Mediterranean. Forty thousand men were to be marched to the former to threaten England with the phantom of an embarkation on the ocean side. All the success of the enterprise

against Minorca depended on the belief that England might give to these demonstrations; which in my plan were not altogether chimerical; for if the English were too unready to take their forces to the Mediterranean, nothing need prevent us from attacking the islands of Jersey and Guernsey.

While this feint was preparing at the West, everything was to be made ready at the South, in the harbours of Toulon and Marseille, for the transportation of thirty-five battalions, convoyed by a squadron sufficient to protect them. These double preparatives, by dividing the attention of England, set a trap for her which it would be hard to avoid, especially if the secret of the Minorca expedition were well kept. As it was, England fell into it, and it was only in consequence of our delays that the squadron of Admiral Byng arrived to the succour of Fort Saint-Philip, though even then long after the disembarkation of our troops.

It must be allowed that the English could scarcely regard as serious an expedition about which so much public talk was made. This was the first time it was ever useful for a government not to know how to keep its secrets. Another incredible fact is that the king had no plan or map of the actual condition of Fort Saint-Philip; and they proceeded to attack that place on a plan which M. Massonès, the Spanish ambassador, gave me, which he thought very good; but which was only that of the old fortress in the days when the Spaniards possessed it. We should never have undertaken the siege of that fortress had we known to what a formidable condition the English had brought it; therefore its capture may be regarded as a species of miracle. I remember that when M. Duverney read me the lists of the utensils and implements collected for the siege of Port-Mahon, I said to him: "You have forgotten the most essential thing; add scaling-ladders." This reflection seems prophetic, and

did not prove useless, for they took Fort Saint-Philip by assault.

After many committee-meetings, memorials that I took to them, and intrigues that thwarted my project, it was decided to send the king's Requisition to the Court of London. I asked the minister of the navy whether the transports and the squadron would be ready by the time the answer of the King of England arrived, and whether, in case of refusal, we could act immediately, — a condition necessary for success, inasmuch as the enterprise against Minorca was reasonable only so long as it was possible to seize the island before it could be succoured. He assured me that all would be ready in a month. It must be told that, although on the part of the minister of war, all was ready at the time agreed upon, it was not so in the Mediterranean ports; but M. d'Argenson desired the enterprise, and M. de Machault did not [M. de Machault was Keeper of the Seals and minister of the navy also].

As soon as the king's Requisition had started, I urged the appointment of the generals who were to command on the coasts of the ocean and the Mediteranean. The Maréchal de Belleisle was chosen for the Western coast, and I contributed much to the selection of Maréchal de Richelieu for that of the South. In consequence of these appointments great movements of troops took place, and many transports were collected in the ocean ports; but the naval preparations in the Mediterranean for the attack on Minorca were very slow and few in number. Part of the ministry flattered themselves that England would seize the means offered her by the king for peace; and, in fact, if the Court of London had not resolved on war it would not have rejected so reasonable an offer of conciliation. But its course was already determined, and it was counting on an enterprise, then unknown, which was to make us lose Canada. In France, on the contrary,

the English were thought to be pacific because we were so ourselves.

A courier was sent to Maréchal de Belleisle who was then at Bisi bidding adieu to the Duc de Nivernais, who was starting for Berlin. The maréchal came at once to Court, being wholly ignorant of the king's Requisition and the project of attacking Minorca. The king ordered me to inform him of this affair. M. de Belleisle was not then in the Council, but he entered it shortly after in place of Maréchal de Noailles. After the taking of Minorca Maréchal de Belleisle allowed his friends to say that he was the author of the plan of that expedition; M. de Machault, by a few cold words, sustained that idea, and quite recently the ill-informed author of the "Political Testament of the Maréchal de Belleisle" has attributed to him all that merit. I do not deny that others besides myself may have had the idea of attacking Minorca, but the plan that was followed for the taking of that island belongs to me alone.

As long as the affair seemed a doubtful one, I was blamed for being its instigator; when it succeeded, my credit for the plan was disputed. When the answer from England arrived, and her refusal made war certain, I was not, as the saying is, "fit to throw to the dogs;" and the ministers reproached one another for having listened to the counsel of a young man; even Mme. de Pompadour thought herself obliged to console me for the little success of my memorial. I told her that I did not need consolation; that I had all along expected the refusal of England, because I had better known her intentions. I assured Mme. de Pompadour that she would soon see the good effect produced in all the Courts of Europe by the king's Requisition; that it was only necessary that she should urge the departure of the troops for the attack on Minorca, and that she must not worry

herself at what they might think at Versailles of my projects.

The result was that Europe applauded the moderation of the king; and if all wishes were not in our favour, at any rate we had all the votes, and the blame fell on England only. The king's Council then began to do justice to my views. But the minister of the navy would not hasten his preparations; the secret of the expedition got wind; the affair was actually talked of three months before it was undertaken. M. de Richelieu spit fire and flame; he feared, with good reason, that the English would forestall him. I made him resolve to start for Marseille, telling him that his presence could alone hasten the preparations.

In point of fact, his activity triumphed over the slowness of the navy, the indiscretions of the government, and the negligence of the English. The rest is well known. Maréchal de Richelieu, after the successful battle of M. de la Galissonnière against the English fleet, had no fear that Port-Mahon could be succoured for a long time; but he did not advance very much in the taking of Fort Saint-Philip. I have already said that if we had known the strength of that fortress, we should never have determined to attack it. It is perhaps the first time in our history that the ignorance of a ministry has been useful to the State. Maréchal de Richelieu, rightly judging that he would have difficulty in reducing Fort Saint-Philip by regular approaches, conceived the bold design of carrying it by general assault. This undertaking, almost foolhardy, succeeded by the extraordinary valour of his troops, the slackness of the besieged, and especially by the inexperience of Lord Blakeney, to whom, however, the English nation raised a statue to commemorate his fine defence.[1]

[1] See Appendix I.

This success intoxicated France, disconcerted the Court of London, and threw it into consternation; we made pretty songs, and believed that in future it would be as easy to conquer the English as it now was to laugh at them. I ought to have felt more flattered than others by this victory, inasmuch as I was the original author of it, but I saw in this advantage only a certain means of ending the war gloriously. I proposed to the king's Council, he being then at Compiègne, to address a second Requisition to the Court of London, in which the king offered peace with the restitution of Minorca, provided England returned our vessels, sailors, and merchandise, and freed us forever from the stipulations of the Treaty of Utrecht in regard to Dunkerque.

This action on the part of the king was calculated to cover him with glory, and to secure peace. It seemed to me impossible that England should not accept these pacific propositions; the expedition of General Braddock into Canada had failed; the British ministry was harassed, divided, dismayed. By this means the maritime war was at an end, and it was more than likely that the King of Prussia, seeing us freed from all naval embarrassments, would not risk uniting all our forces against him by attacking the Courts of Saxony, and Vienna. This monarch had sent to Minorca Prince Frederick of Wurtemberg, who, on his return, passed through Compiègne, and scandalized us all by the contemptuous tone in which he spoke of our troops and our generals. Dunkerque, freed from its servitude, was worth far more to us than Minorca; Louis XV. would have had the advantage of wiping out the shame of Louis XIV.'s misfortunes; Europe would have had a long peace; a million of men would still be living; the peoples would not have been exhausted; in a word, the idea was luminous.

They laughed at me. When I proposed it the ministers told me that the people of Paris would fling mud in my face if it knew me to be the author of such a project (as if the intoxication of a light-minded populace should rule the Council of a wise king!). In a word, this view was rejected with a species of derision. At the present moment, when we feel all its merits, it is shown to have been valuable; but when men are at the head of a great State, they ought to be able to see in advance the true point to lay hold of.

The foreign ministers were informed that I had given this salutary advice; and they congratulated me at Compiègne, at the king's *lever*.

It has been seen that I led the Court of Vienna to a simple treaty of alliance and guarantee. That work advanced far during the months of December, January, and February; by the beginning of March, 1756, only a few difficulties remained to smooth away, when we suddenly learned that the King of Prussia had not only signed, but ratified a convention with the Court of London. This convention was all the more alarming to the Court of Vienna, because the Low Countries were not included in the species of guarantee conveyed by that treaty, so that those Countries might be invaded by France, or attacked by England and Prussia, if the Court of Vienna made no arrangement with the Court of Versailles, or that of London, to put them in safety. The empress, in truth, could not remain long exposed to this double danger. On the other hand, the king had much reason to complain of his Prussian Majesty, his ally, not only for having negotiated secretly with our enemies, and for ratifying this treaty against our solicitations, but especially for trying to deprive the king of a right he had acquired by the treaty of Westphalia, that of coming to the assistance of the princes and States of the Empire

when oppressed: a unique right, which France and Sweden had bought at a cost of much blood and money, and the laborious acquisition of which immortalized Cardinal de Richelieu, who conceived the project, and Cardinal Mazarin who had the happiness and the ability to conclude it.

Under these circumstances the Court of Vienna conceived the hope of making the king adopt the first plan proposed by the empress in 1755. The king's Council was of opinion that to calm the anxieties of the empress and gain time, it was well to examine and discuss that first plan, the bad conduct of the King of Prussia towards us authorizing his Majesty to do so. I was not of that opinion; I thought it wiser and more decent to make a treaty of neutrality, or one of alliance purely defensive, than to enter upon the negotiation of a plan which the Council had no intention of carrying out. But my voice was not the strongest, for it was the only one on that side; besides which, I found myself in opposition to the paternal heart of the king, which had long sought means to strengthen the uncertain position of his daughter and her husband, the Duke of Parma. I was therefore charged to declare to M. de Staremberg that the king no longer refused to treat with the empress on her original plan which had previously been rejected.

The Court of Vienna, having compelled us to make this stride, did not delay proposing to us an arrangement which seemed all the more reasonable because, without changing our system, it secured us reciprocally from war with each other. M. de Staremberg communicated to me the form of a treaty, or convention of neutrality, on which the Austrian Court insisted strongly, in order to remove from its mind all uneasiness as to the Low Countries. Will it be believed that this proposition was unanimously rejected by the king's Council? That very Council which did not hesitate to make

far more serious engagements with the empress refused to make a simple agreement of neutrality!

Under these circumstances I fell ill; I was bled several times, — the last time in the foot, when I was wounded in the periosteum. Though ill and crippled, my work did not diminish. To sufferings of the body were added most grievous distresses of a heart capable of friendship. A respected and intimate friend of mine [the Comtesse de Rohan] was dying in Paris, and at the same time I lost a niece whom I loved much. I had myself carried to their houses and received their last farewells. That sight, and their deaths, which followed immediately, renewed my illness to the point of making it very serious. It was in the midst of all this anguish that the courier despatched to Vienna with our refusal of the treaty of neutrality returned to Paris.

I shall remember all my life on Good Friday how on that day M. de Staremberg came to tell me the nature of the despatches he had received. I was extremely weak, I had been bled four times; while in that state the imperial minister declared to me that his Court, justly alarmed at our refusal, demanded as a guarantee of the king's intentions, not only that the agreement of neutrality be signed, but also a treaty of defensive alliance; in default of which the empress, exposed equally to Prussia and to England, would be obliged, for her own safety, to renew her treaties with her former allies.

I have said already that I was not permitted to employ a secretary for the work that related to the affairs of Vienna. I therefore wrote for three hours under dictation of M. de Staremberg. That labour done, I began another, lasting four hours, to render account to the king of the bad effect produced in Vienna by the refusal of neutrality; also to M. Rouillé and the other members of the committee, who were

dispersed in their country-houses for the Easter holidays. This negotiation lasted a week, — without my illness, which gave me fever, relaxing for a moment. I will say here, in passing, that I have always had more difficulty in negotiating with my own Court than with foreign Courts. I am surprised that at this crisis my health sufficed for what I did.

I succeeded, by these writings, in calming the minds of the ministers and in making them understand that there was no more danger in signing an agreement of neutrality and a treaty of purely defensive alliance with the empress than there had been in signing a treaty of guarantee and alliance which they had resolved to do a month earlier. I was therefore ordered to declare to M. de Staremberg that in the very first days of my convalescence the last proposals of the empress would be definitely determined on in a meeting at which the whole Council would assemble.

O my nephews! for whom alone I write these Memoirs, keep yourselves, so far as it depends on you, from entering upon great public affairs! Let the knowledge of all that my heart and mind have suffered deter you; but if your duty calls you there, learn of me with what uprightness, prudence, courage you must conduct yourselves.

The Treaty of Versailles was signed May 1, 1756.[1] I shall say nothing about it; it is known to all the world. Both sides agreed that it should not be made public until the two crowns had informed the Court of Madrid of its existence.

The king was never so pleased as at the moment when I went to tell him that M. Rouillé and I, as his ministers plenipotentiary, had signed the treaty of eternal alliance between himself and the empress; his Majesty owned to me that this was the completion of the work he had most desired to perform.

[1] See Appendix II.

The publication of the treaty was not made until we had given notice of it to the Courts of Madrid and Berlin, and after the exchange of ratifications. It is to be remarked that the secret of so long a negotiation had not transpired in any way, despite the vigilance and curiosity of the foreign ministers. At first the treaty made a most favourable impression upon France; it was regarded as a masterpiece of prudence and policy; the nation desired peace, and it was thought that this alliance gave it and would maintain it. The applause it gained tempted M. Rouillé; his friends and his family declared him to be the author of it. But when the King of Prussia invaded Saxony, and war became certain, they returned the treaty to me in full, and no member of the Council would admit having had a part in it.

The foreign Courts, for the most part, looked with jealousy and fear on this union of the two most powerful Houses in Europe. The King of Prussia, to whom the king communicated the treaty, did not seem vexed by it. That dissimulation failed to reassure me as to the future. His minister, M. de Knyphausen, congratulated me with much politeness. The Court of Turin and all Italy became uneasy and alarmed; Germany shared those feelings; as for England, she did not conceal her vexation, and qualified the alliance as monstrous and unnatural. At Versailles, they regarded the affair as strengthening Mme. de Pompadour's influence and elevating me. From that time, our enemies set to work to break up our union, in which they succeeded eighteen months later.

I own that, disgusted by the jealousies of the ministry and by M. Rouillé's obstinacy in concealing from me not only what was happening in the Courts of Europe, but even the instructions which he gave to the ministers of the king in Germany, which conformed so little to the spirit and

letter of the Treaty of Versailles that M. de Staremberg was continually bringing me, and not without reason, most serious complaints, — I own, I say, that all these impediments and inconsistencies made me earnestly desire that the king would let me go and exercise my functions as ambassador in Madrid. I even proposed to leave in the hands of the king a memorial in which I should state the principles by which to direct the conduct of the new plenipotentiary whom the king would select to carry on this important affair. But his Majesty thought that no one was as capable as I to conduct a negotiation which I had had in hand for over a year, and of which I knew all the advantages, inconveniences, and dangers. His Majesty therefore opposed my departure for Spain and thought that by putting me into the Council he should remedy the provoking practices of M. Rouillé, who could not then keep from me a knowledge of what was happening in the cabinets of Europe nor the instructions he was giving to the king's ministers at foreign Courts. His Majesty decided, therefore, that I was to take my seat at the next Council as minister of State.

Mme. de Pompadour, in speaking to me of this intention of the king, told me that he did not wish to inform the ministers of his determination, but that his Majesty had permitted her to tell M. de Machault, of whom she was sure. I applauded the confidence she had in her friend, but I assured her that that confidence would close the door of the Council against me, redouble M. Rouillé's jealousy, and rouse that of the other ministers. The marquise would not believe it, declaring that M. de Machault had lately said to her that after the death of M. Rouillé, which seemed near at hand, the king would have "a great minister of Foreign Affairs in me." That eulogy did not make me change my opinion; and I was right, for as soon as M. de

Machault received her confidence he sent M. Rouillé to the king to make serious remonstrances and touching jeremiads. That minister represented to his Majesty that he himself had removed him from the navy department to that of Foreign Affairs; that it was dishonouring him and taking from him the confidence of foreigners to make me a minister of State in consequence of the Treaty of Versailles; that all Europe would see in me the real minister, and in him a figure-head; that if he had lost the confidence of the king he asked only to retire; and finally, that, informed as I was in all matters relating to Spain and the rest of Europe, he could not find at this important crisis any one capable of replacing me. This argument did not convince the king, but it embarrassed him. He reassured M. Rouillé as to his fears and spoke to him with such kindness that the little man thought himself justified in treating me haughtily, and accusing me to my face of an unreasonable ambition which would never be gratified. I was master of myself; my life at Court had long trained me to patience; I answered, judiciously and firmly, that I had never thought of the place of minister of State; that I did not mind its being taken from me provided the service of the king and my own reputation did not suffer in consequence.

M. de Machault, the author of this mischief, proposed to me, in order to conciliate matters, that the Marquis d'Aubeterre, then minister at Vienna, should be sent to Spain, and that I should go, clothed with ambassadorial dignities to the Imperial Court. This snare was very shrewd; if I refused so important an embassy it was easy to present me to the king's mind as an ambitious man, whose project was to govern the Court; consequently I did not hesitate one moment in accepting M. de Machault's proposition, and I asked him to inform Mme. de Pompadour

at once of my acceptance. The marquise, who began from that moment to distrust M. de Machault's sincerity, wished to refuse this expedient; but I made her comprehend the necessity of giving in to it, in order to put the king at his ease and to disarm by this moderation the jealousy of the minister, at any rate, for a while. At the same time I wrote the king a letter, in which I made him see the purity of my intentions, the simple character of my views, and the limit of my ambition. I made him feel that the idea of my entering the Council came from himself, and that, provided his Majesty put me in a position where I could be better informed and less thwarted than I now was, I asked no more. The king was satisfied with my sentiments and my conduct, but he had much difficulty in renouncing his intention to put me in the Council; in fact, it was more than three weeks before he could resolve to appoint me to the embassy of Vienna.

Meanwhile, in the midst of all these intrigues, our ulterior negotiations with Vienna advanced but slowly and with many difficulties. I at last forced the imperial minister to consent that our offensive action should be subordinate to the one case of the King of Prussia being the first to violate the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. This will show how just and fair the king was towards his Prussian Majesty, and how destitute of all foundation were the pretexts with which the Berlin Court tried to colour its unjust invasions.

This first difficulty settled, there remained a host of others to smooth down, as much in regard to the tranquillity of Italy as to that of the Low Countries, and to the objects I had always proposed to myself in the negotiations with the Court of Vienna, namely: uprooting all germs of war between that Court and ours in the present and for the future; detaching from England her principal allies; increas-

ing in France harbours, fortresses, resources, and, finally, maritime advantages and positions able to render uneasy, and even to weaken, the commerce and navy of England. I would that I were permitted to explain this more clearly; it would then be seen that no minister of France has ever had sounder views, or suggested measures more fitted to secure the tranquillity of Europe, to weaken England, and procure for France solid resources against an inimical power now grown formidable.

We should, at the same time, reflect on the striking singularity offered by the union of two Courts enemies for three centuries and now allied for the last three months; the reciprocal hatreds, the great distrusts were smothered, but suspicions remained which private interests and contending political principles nourished on both sides. This delicate and embarrassing situation for the negotiators required on their part great prudence, patience, and cleverness: these qualities alone would not have sufficed without respective sincerity; it must be said that both Courts put much into their manner of negotiating with each other.

During the course of these thorny discussions, we heard from all sides that the King of Prussia was assembling his forces, preparing magazines, and mounting his artillery. The king's Council, in defiance of M. d'Argenson, persisted in regarding these offensive demonstrations as vain threats on the part of the King of Prussia, who was seeking to make himself of importance, they said, and show Europe that the union of the Courts of Versailles and Vienna inspired him with no fear.

As for me, who, six months earlier, had said to the king's Council that the publication of the Treaty of Versailles would determine the King of Prussia to attack Saxony and Bohemia before the Courts of Vienna and Dresden could

take precautions to prevent it, I felt the gravest anxiety for the fate of Saxony and Bohemia. The empress had only from twenty-five to twenty-six thousand men ready to be called into the field; the Electorate of Saxony only eighteen thousand; the Court of Dresden floated between misplaced confidence and helpless anxiety.

It was under these circumstances that the King of Prussia presented a singular memorial to the Court of Vienna, in which he asked the empress to declare to him formally that she would not think of attacking him for two years; and he went on to say that in default of that express declaration he should be under the necessity of forestalling his enemies and dispersing the storm which threatened him. This proposal was, it must be allowed, as extraordinary as it was insulting. It was converting the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, guaranteed by all the European powers, into a two years' truce. Thus the Court of Vienna was very excusable for answering as it did; but it had only twenty thousand men assembled in camp at Kolin, whereas the King of Prussia had a hundred thousand under arms. It would certainly have been wiser, while calling the attention of the Court of Berlin to the indecency and singularity of its proposal, to have given the king the assurance he demanded; such a course would, at any rate, have postponed the war, given the empress time to assemble her forces, sheltered Saxony from sudden attack, brought the other Courts, whom we desired to unite in our measures, to an explanation, and given ourselves time to make military and financial preparations. The Court of Vienna hastened to reply to the King of Prussia, and did not communicate to us its answer until it was sent.

This precipitation filled me with distress. I saw that the theatre of war was thrown open before the actors were pre-

pared to enter upon the stage. I felt the confusion, disorder, and, possibly, the disasters which would come of so hasty a step. The Court of Vienna excused itself on the ground of the indecency of the King of Prussia's memorial, on its outraged dignity, and on the danger of giving two years more to its enemy to prepare for war. But the secret motive of this haste was founded on a greater and more essential interest; the Court of Vienna was now nearly at one with us on all the fundamental points; it therefore hastened to embark the affair for fear lest some event, some circumstance might prevent us from openly taking its side; it considered that it would never have a finer opportunity to reduce the King of Prussia; that, the war once begun, negotiations would be keener and more prompt; that the Court of Russia (which that of Vienna had long been sounding) would decide upon its course more readily after the invasion of Saxony and Bohemia; that the said invasion would arm the Empire against the King of Prussia and determine France and Sweden (in their capacity as guarantors of the Peace of Westphalia) to come to the succour of the oppressed States; and, finally, that if the King of Prussia had successes at first, the scene would change through the union of the forces of so many powerful monarchies.

All these reflections were just, and results proved them so in a great measure; but it is not less true that the precipitate haste of the Court of Vienna was the real cause of the loss of Saxony and of the battle of Lowositz (October 1, 1756); and to it must be attributed a part of the misfortunes of the whole war, especially of the distress into which we were thrown in the matter of finance. I do not hesitate, therefore, to assert that the Court of Vienna made, by this action, a capital blunder; it rushed an affair which might have been settled by time, and in consequence France, Swe-

den, the Empire, and the Court of Vienna were hurried into war while still unprepared for it.

I shall not relate here the manner in which the King of Prussia comported himself in Saxony, nor the conduct of the King of Poland; I do not pretend to write the history of the war.[1] If military maxims excuse the King of Prussia for having besieged the latter prince in Pirna in a time of absolute peace, and, after making his army prisoners of war, having incorporated it into his own; if politically he had the right to force the cabinet of Dresden, to search the archives of that Court for knowledge and motives that might justify his invasion, no reason whatever can excuse the treatment to which he subjected the Queen of Poland and the royal family.

It is known that the want of resolution of the Saxon army prevented it from joining the Austrian army, of which General Brown had led a portion with some ability into the neighbourhood of Pirna, and that this general lost by his own fault the battle of Lowositz when the King of Prussia had no longer any hope of winning it.

The King of Prussia may be blamed for the invasion, but not for the occupation of Saxony: in the first case he committed an injustice; in the second he behaved as a general and an able prince, in procuring for himself advantages and military resources without which he would infallibly have succumbed; the capitulation of Pirna was a fine model to follow for that of Kloster-zeven. In war all is justified by success; besides the fact that the beaten always pay the forfeit, the temporizers are blamed when they fail, and are often despised by their public and by posterity. It is

[1] For the military history of the Seven Years' War, viewed from the Austrian side by one who fought its battles, see the Memoirs of the Prince de Ligne, in the present Historical Series. — TR.

shameful to humanity that maxims so unjust should be consecrated by the history of all ages.

As soon as the King of Prussia had entered Saxony, the empress claimed from us the twenty-four thousand men stipulated for by the Treaty of Versailles. Orders were given to put that body in motion. I was of opinion that we ought to send our German troops at once to the support of the empress; adding to them only two French regiments of four battalions each, which could be replaced by two others in every new campaign; thus we should gradually train to war our whole French infantry, and recruit the twenty-four thousand men from the Empire without making a drain upon our provinces. My advice was rejected. M. d'Argenson, minister of war, at heart an enemy to the new system, but who sought to profit by it to enhance his department, wished, by employing all his forces, to make himself necessary, become firmer in his post, and eclipse his enemy, M. de Machault. He represented that we were now too closely in accord with the Court of Vienna to keep strictly to the Treaty of Versailles; that the season was too advanced for our twenty-four thousand men to reach Bohemia in time (which was true); that the corps, marching at this season, would be half destroyed before it got there, and could only be fit for action much later; that our German contingent would give a less good idea of France than our national troops; that the empress desired to be served by Frenchmen, of whom she knew the value (this also was true, and, moreover, she well knew that a corps of French troops would be better kept up than one of foreign troops); in short, that to send these troops now was to put twenty-four thousand men into the hands of the Court of Vienna as hostages, and make our ulterior arrangements more difficult.

These arguments prevailed; besides which, the king ar-

dently desired that the great plan negotiated with the Court of Vienna should be carried out in its entirety. M. de Machault, who had been eager for the whole scheme of the treaties with the empress so long as he believed that the King of Prussia would never enter upon a war, now began to feel differently; but he no longer had any support in the king's Council. The Maréchal de Noailles and M. de Séchelles had retired from it, also the Marquis de Puysieux. They were replaced by the Maréchal de Belleisle, great Prussian at heart, but won over by M. d'Argenson; the maréchal, knowing well, moreover, that a continental war would bring his military talents and experience into activity, was opposed to the temporizing system of M. de Machault. Thus, contrary to my advice, the twenty-four thousand men did not march; and I was charged with making the imperial minister consider this delay satisfactory by a memorial which held out hopes of still greater assistance when we had agreed on certain ulterior objects. The Court of Vienna lent itself to these ideas, and the negotiation resumed its former activity.

M. de Machault still hoped to avert the land war by demanding sixty-six millions annually for the navy so long as the war should last. They were granted to him as if the king had a fairy wand for the creation of gold. It is to be remarked that the most costly campaign — that during the ministry of M. de Seignelay, when France had nearly two hundred ships of war and frigates — had cost the late king, including the colonies, only twenty-eight millions. I know that costs of living and labour have increased; but the pay of the soldier and the salary of naval officers remain the same. This operation completed, no ground was left for this shrewd minister (though little versed in great affairs) to make reasonable objection to a land war.

The misfortunes of the King of Poland, the tears of his daughter the dauphine, and the loss of the battle of Lowositz, contributed not a little to decide us. The king's generosity, his love for his family, the ardour always felt for new allies, joined to the advantages we and our friends expected to derive from our conventions with the Court of Vienna, combined to make us take the resolution of entering upon a continental war, in case we agreed with the Court of Vienna as to ulterior arrangements. I was ordered to declare to M. de Staremberg that, in case the king decided to act with nearly all his forces and those of his allies, the Imperial minister must present as soon as possible a general plan of convention, as much for the sake of his own Court as for us and our allies, — a plan on which we could, within a short time, reach a final decision.

For the rest, I may say it is demonstrable that the arrangements taken with the empress-queen were maturely reflected upon, discussed, and weighed by the king and his Council; that this great work, for which I was held responsible after events, was the work of the king and his ministry; and that I myself, being charged as I was with all the labour, was neither relieved nor helped nor protected by any one; that I was constantly refused the means of informing myself of what was happening in Europe; and that when, January 2, 1757, the king finally determined to make me enter the Council of State, he had less in view to reward me for my long and painful labours than to put me in the way of being better informed of his affairs, in order to make me more capable of supporting them against the imperial minister.

Madame Infanta told me that the king wrote to her at this time a letter in which he said expressly that he could have desired I should serve him a few more years

at foreign Courts before entering the Council, but that circumstances obliged him to advance that period in order that I might be in a better position to terminate the important affairs with which I was now charged.

It was towards the end of the month of December, 1756, that, weary of the eternal jealousy of M. Rouillé, the impertinences of his wife and his family, and foreseeing that a machine so ill-mounted would never be solid, I determined to leave to that minister the direction of the definite arrangements. I asked seriously to be sent to Vienna to fulfil the functions of my embassy. M. Rouillé acquiesced with joy; the king appeared to consent, and he promised me the *cordon bleu* on the first of January; but, for all that, he had resolved to appoint me a minister of State, from the same views and with the same reasons as before. I was not informed of this resolution until the evening before New Year's day. Thus, instead of being commander of the Order of the Saint-Esprit, I entered the king's Council, January 2, 1757.

The Maréchal de Richelieu, who was serving that year as first gentleman of the Bed-chamber, said to me a quarter of an hour before the king ordered him to call me to enter the Council: "Why, having so much business with the king, don't you ask for the *entrées* to the chamber? If you like, I will make the proposal to the king for you." I answered, laughing, that I accepted his offer willingly. He was much astonished a moment later to hear the king say to me, "Abbé de Bernis, take your seat at the Council."

Mme. de Pompadour, taught by experience, was careful this time not to impart to M. de Machault my coming ministry. The silence she kept disconcerted the intrigues which would otherwise not have failed to oppose me.

Before going farther, it is necessary to treat separately of what gave rise to a *lit de justice*, which the king held in the month of December, 1756, and to give a general idea of the affairs of parliament, by an historical summary of what had taken place there during the last twenty-five years.

VII.

Affairs of Parliament, and what related thereto during my Ministry.

1732–1758. It is well known that the parliaments of France are never so firm in their principles, nor so heated in their assemblies, as when it is a matter of their independence of our kings and of the power of the popes, or when they have to debate questions which touch upon religion and ecclesiastical jurisdiction; and that their zeal in this respect flies to arms at the slightest encroachment of the Court of Rome. The latter ought, therefore, to take account of this disposition, and regulate its conduct by it, in all that relates to the Church of France and our liberties. The French clergy also ought never to risk what may rouse the ardent and rather suspicious zeal of the parliaments. The Church has always lost in this conflict of jurisdiction; the public has need of the parliaments for the administration of justice; the Court has need of them for the registration of financial edicts. Thus the parliaments will always rise above any attack made upon their legitimate rights, just as they will always succumb when they attempt to cross their prescribed limits. I will state presently the principles that should be followed in the affairs that relate to parliament, and the methods by which that Assembly can infallibly be restrained within the limits of its essential functions.

Without speaking here of the heat with which King Louis XIV. was made to act in order to obtain from the Court of

Rome the bull Unigenitus, I shall remark that the ministry of Cardinal de Fleury was perpetually troubled by the mutual clashing of clergy and parliaments in relation to that same bull Unigenitus. We know what happened in 1732. The king issued, on the 18th of August, a declaration which forbade the parliaments to make repeated remonstrances, under pain of disobedience; it allowed the grand-chamber alone to receive appeals against abuses, take cognizance of ecclesiastical matters, of the liberties of the Gallican church, of the maxims of the kingdom; but it forbade the grand-chamber from holding any deliberation on the above matters except on the requirement of the king's lawyers, or on the proposition of whoever presided over the said grand-chamber; it deprived also the chambers of inquests and petitions of their freedom to deliberate on any public matter elsewhere than in the general assembly of the chambers; and it forbade parliament to cease its functions without permission of the king, under pain of disobedience and deprivation of its offices. Parliament refused to enregister the declaration. The king held a *lit de justice* at Versailles, September 1, 1732, and had the declaration registered. Parliament, on its return to Paris, protested against the registration and insisted on the recall of certain of its exiled members. The king, irritated, exiled one hundred and thirty more September 7. But Cardinal de Fleury, who was preparing for war, and who felt that they could neither destroy parliament nor supply its place, and that the kingdom could not long do without the administration of justice, recalled the exiled members without any condition, and the king consented that the effects of his declaration should be suspended.

We see in what happened then the history of what has happened since; and what will always happen when the

Court acts without a plan, without preparation, and without principles; it weakens, or at least it compromises the royal authority by acts little reflected on and by indecent retreats.

After that period, Cardinal de Fleury carefully kept himself from employing such violent means, and as the idea of the king's authority is graven in France on all minds and all hearts, that authority recovered its rights as soon as they ceased to expose it to the resistance of parliament. In fact, in spite of the nullification of the king's declaration enregistered in 1732 at a *lit de justice*, the king seemed more master than ever of his parliament, until the trouble excited by the certificates of confession [*billets de confession*] which the Archbishop of Paris, M. de Beaumont, thought it his duty to exact at deathbeds, the affair of the Hospitals, and that of the Filles Saint-Marie, again lighted the almost extinct embers of discord and fanaticism.

The protection which the king unwisely gave, by advice of Comte d'Argenson and the Bishop of Mirepoix, to the Archbishop of Paris in these matters excited the greatest fermentation in the parliaments, was the cause of the attempted assassination of the king by Damiens, January 5, 1757, and has ended by giving to the enemies of the bull Unigenitus an air of victory and triumph. So that the misguided zeal of a few bishops made that bull lose by degrees a part of the protection which the late king Louis XIV. and the reigning king granted to it.

The open quarrel between Comte d'Argenson and M. de Machault aided much in the anarchy into which the government fell in consequence of the affairs of the bull. The intrigues of those two ministers set in opposition the clergy to the parliament and the parliament to the clergy; the direction of affairs concerning those bodies passed, in turn, from one to the other of the two ministers, until it came at

last into the hands of the Prince de Conti, who set himself to win parliament, and who, by his private work with the king, obtained day by day more respect and more influence in that assembly.

On the other hand, M. de Maupeou, chief-president, who joined to the talent of eloquence external graces of intrigue and cajolery, led his parliament at the pleasure of the Court just so long as he retained the hope given to him of being made Keeper of the Seals; but as soon as he perceived that this intention was changed, and that M. de Machault was to have that important post, he comprehended that, having nothing more to expect from the Court, he had no other way to make himself important than to attach himself wholly to parliament, and substitute the firmness of the magistrate for the suppleness of the courtier.

It was in the midst of this great fermentation that M. de Puysieux gave to the king, as I have already said, my memorial in which I stated the principles that ought to guide the conduct of his Majesty in the affairs relating to the clergy and the parliaments. This memorial will be found among my papers. It foretold what has happened since, and roused a fear of the revival of that fanaticism, as dangerous for the king as for the State, which armed, under very different circumstances, the parricide hands of the Clements and Ravaillacs. I called to mind my prediction on the 5th of January, 1757, and I deplored the blindness of a ministry that had precipitated the State into such trouble, for want of foresight and principles of administration.

All affairs that can agitate parliament, especially those that concern religion, ought to be smothered at birth and destroyed in their germ whenever men of wisdom in these assemblies, however few in number, are able to quench at its origin the progress of the fire. But when matters have

once started, judicial forms and methods carry them rapidly along, and a decision once given, the wisest minds find themselves linked with the hottest heads; they cannot then, without violent shocks, abolish or reform the decrees of parliament.

We all remember that in May, 1753, the gentlemen of the courts of inquests and petitions were exiled to various parts of the kingdom, and that two days later the presidents and counsellors of the grand-chamber were transferred to Pontoise by *lettre de cachet.* The refusal of the sacraments, ordered, often improperly, by the Archbishop of Paris, had caused parliament to issue injunctions to administer them: both sides passed their due limits; but was the king well-advised to exile his parliament? He attempted in vain to replace it by the creation of a royal chamber, the work of M. d'Argenson, which the other ministers did much to discredit.

It is impossible to exile and supersede the parliament of Paris without all the other parliaments in the kingdom espousing its cause; hence it would be necessary to suppress them all; but what rash head would dare to give that counsel to the king? What disturbance would be caused to the whole machinery of the State if it came to that! Into what anarchy would affairs be plunged! Where find the necessary money to buy back the offices? and even if money could be had, who would dare to resolve on striking so great a blow without having the means ready to supply by other tribunals the functions of the parliaments? What tribunal already established would be willing to take charge of them? Could new tribunals be composed of magistrates drawn from companies? Would such magistrates be trained in affairs belonging to the jurisdiction of the parliaments? Before they had acquired the necessary

knowledge and experience how could justice be rendered to the king's subjects? Besides, would the public have any confidence in the new tribunals, at any rate unless they showed the same firmness and the same principles as the suppressed parliaments? So that the king would meet with more opposition in the parliaments of his new creation than in the former ones. You cannot destroy in a day bodies which have sent such deep roots into the very foundations of the monarchy. Is it to be supposed that the king could try and judge in his Council all the contentious affairs of the kingdom? or that the registration of his edicts done by his own Council would fail to inspire fear and great distrust in his provinces and his subjects? or that this passage from monarchy to despotism could take place tranquilly and without danger? No! The king, after being sufficiently enlightened, must be master of his kingdom; without which, anarchy and confusion, disorder and trouble would infallibly reign and the State would be in danger; but it is necessary to put a curb on the despotism of ministers, to enlighten at times their ignorance, to rectify their blunders, to remedy the caprices of favourites, to prop their failures, to guard the weakness of their government against undertakings from within and without.

When the king no longer lacks money he will have no need of his parliaments; they will not then prevail through their compliance or their resistance. Thus it is of consequence to regulate the finances, to refrain from overtaxing the people, to avoid unnecessary expenses, in order not to be obliged to have frequent recourse to the registration of bursal edicts. When the people are not oppressed, when the course of law and justice is not interrupted by storms at Court and fermentations in parliament, the public in France is always for the king; the distinctive

characteristic of the nation is to love its master, to respect his authority, to defend him against all, provided that authority does not treat the people with rigour.

But pains must be taken to govern the parliaments and to prevent the storms that arise there. By a few deserved distinctions, by confidence, by concert of feeling, it would be easy to maintain the calmness and subordination of those great bodies. For it must be said, to the praise of the magistracy, that it is the part of the nation which has preserved the best morals and the most integrity; all things can be done with it by gentleness, by wisdom, by conforming to rules and system. What strange abuse of power it has been to force the king to act always by authority! Do we not feel that instead of increasing that authority, which is so necessary, it is weakened by enterprises that have often proved ineffectual?

The whole secret of legitimate and recognized authority consists in never compromising itself, and, consequently, in estimating correctly the resistance that projects may encounter in execution. But in 1753 the king's Council was far indeed from that opinion and much opposed to such wise maxims.

Parliament was relegated from Pontoise to Soissons; it was recalled to Paris in August, 1754, without any conditions, which further weakened public opinion, not of the authority of the king, but of that of his administration. The Prince de Conti had much to do with this return of parliament, and with the declaration of the king ordering silence on matters of religion and enjoining parliament to take in hand the enforcement of this silence, so necessary to the welfare of religion and the tranquillity of the State, and see that it was neither troubled nor broken on either side. This declaration was sent to parliament and registered Sep-

tember 4, 1754; it was a criticism on the whole course of the ministry up to that time.

I have already remarked that it would have been very wise in the king to establish that law if his Majesty had himself undertaken to execute it; but it was certainly an imprudence and even a contradiction to have made parliament the sole and absolute judge of the respective infringers of silence. We must, however, allow that the law was wise, and that it did restrain the two parties up to a certain point. A short calm succeeded all these tempests; the Royal chamber [substituted for parliament], decried equally by the Court and the public, was abolished in September, 1754; but the refusals of the sacraments still continued, and the king, in order to withdraw the Archbishop of Paris from the proceedings of parliament, exiled him to Conflans.

The assembly of the clergy held in Paris in May, 1755, was remarkable. Cardinal de La Rochefoucauld, who presided, and was given that same year the ministry of benefices, was the head of this famous assembly. The bishops were divided on the great question, namely: was the refusal to accept the bull Unigenitus a mortal sin, or merely a sin of grave import? Sixteen bishops were of the first opinion, and seventeen of the second.[1] This division scandalized the public and considerably weakened the strength of the clergy, which consists chiefly in its union. Pope Benedict XIV. was consulted by both parties, and the Comte de Stainville, afterwards Duc de Choiseul, was charged to obtain from the pope an encyclical letter settling the principles of this matter in relation to the conduct which it behooved

[1] For a fairly dispassionate account of what the bull Unigenitus really was, and how it originated, see the "Memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon," Vols. I.–IV. of this Historical Series. — Tr.

bishops and rectors to follow in the administration of the sacraments to those opposed to the bull Unigenitus.

If the letter of that wise and learned pontiff had remained such as he first conceived it, nothing could have been clearer or more decisive; but the fear of alarming the party of the over-zealous bishops caused the insertion into the letter of generalities which gave the Archbishop of Paris and other prelates occasion to find in it an approval of their conduct. It must be admitted, however, that this letter has certainly moderated the too ardent zeal of some and sustained the too timid courage of others, and that the peace of the Church has gained something by it. If Cardinal de La Rochefoucauld had lived longer, and if he, who added to the advantage of illustrious birth social and ecclesiastical virtues, a dignified presence, and a desire for good, had had a little more force of character, much might have been hoped from his influence on the affairs of the Church.

The exile of the Archbishop of Paris to Conflans had re-established a sort of tranquillity in parliament; but the hostilities of England, which foreboded war, having forced the government to increase its financial resources, M. de Machault insisted obstinately on the levying of the two *vingtièmes* in preference to the *dixième*. The latter tax would have been voted unanimously by parliament, which feared, with good reason, that after peace was made one of the *vingtièmes* would be kept on under various pretexts, and so become a lasting burden on the people.

Parliament refused to register the edict; minds became heated; and we saw the revival in a moment of the former fermentation of the parliaments. From that time their union grew closer, the boldest doctrines were developed in their remonstrances; the system of a single parliament in France, of which each of the parliaments should be a portion

or special class, was clearly developed and stoutly sustained. They began to discuss the mystery of "the incarnation of parliament with the king, and the species of production or emanation of the sovereign power resulting from that wonderful union." The Court was indignant at such principles, and alarmed at the sort of league which was beginning to be formed between the different parliaments of the kingdom. But without refuting solidly such novel maxims, it contented itself with registering the edict of the two *vingtièmes* at a *lit de justice* held at Versailles, at which M. de Maupeou, chief-president, spoke with the greatest force and made his hearers face "stupendous evils."

At this period the heat of the parliamentary assemblies, becoming hotter by degrees, communicated itself to the public, and this unbridled license made thoughtful minds afraid of some catastrophe. Our enemies conceived the greatest hopes from such an effervescence of spirits, and I know, in a manner not to be doubted, that England set everything at work, intrigues and money, to inflame these first germs of discord. The whole of the year 1756 was marked by actions which showed the discontent of the parliaments and the murmurings of the people; but in Paris especially the government was criticised in society with an indecency and boldness of language which the silence of the Court seemed to authorize.

The Keeper of the Seals, who was working in secret to pacify the clergy and put a curb on the parliaments, composed with two or three magistrates certain edicts and declarations which were to be registered at a *lit de justice*. This minister thought the work so promising that he would not share the glory of it with his colleagues. I can say that if it had not been for me these edicts would have gone to the *lit de justice* without being examined by his Majesty's

Council. This blind confidence was the first cause of the downfall of the Keeper of the Seals, and also the cause, or the occasion, of a much greater evil. It is rash to attempt suddenly, by the employment of force and authority, to chain up the most vigorous and most powerful bodies in the State.

I was not informed until two days before the *lit de justice* of the bold enterprise of M. de Machault. Mme. de Pompadour informed me, December 11, 1756, of a document, prepared in the cabinet of that minister, which the king was to take before parliament on the 13th to be enregistered at a *lit de justice*. The marquise, biased in favour of her friend, believed the success of this affair infallible. I made her feel the impropriety and the danger of it; she began to see with what imprudence they had proceeded in an affair of that nature. They expected that the masters of inquests and petitions would send in their resignations, but they hoped that the grand-chamber would remain faithful and be sufficient for the whole work of parliament; they felt fully assured of the faithfulness of that chamber, that the Châtelet would continue its functions, that the lawyers and barristers would not shut the doors of their offices, and that the other parliaments of the kingdom would refrain from making common cause with that of Paris. I made her comprehend the emptiness of these illusions. I showed her that the Keeper of the Seals was compromising the king and compromising herself in risking so perilous an enterprise without having previously communicated it to the Council of his Majesty.

The king, who saw the justice of these reflections, resolved, though the letters-patent for the *lit de justice* had already been sent to President de Maupeou, to have his Council examine the declarations and the edicts on the following day. The Council, consulted at such a late moment, merely observed that the affair was already under

way, that had they been consulted earlier they might have had important reflections to make, but as it was, they could only hope for the success of the *lit de justice.* Thus the ministers flung back upon the Keeper of the Seals the iniquity of a work of which they would have appropriated all the merit in case of success. M. d'Argenson was the secret instigator of this unworthy act on the part of the Council. I should remark here that the Keeper of the Seals, out of hatred and jealousy of President Maupeou, had never consented to consult with him. The latter, indignant at this contempt, followed an artful conduct in the course of this affair, of which, however, he was the dupe some years later, as we shall presently see.

The king started, December 13, 1756, to hold his *lit de justice* in Paris. The capital received him in gloomy silence, and parliament with a half-formed intention of quitting its functions. The declaration concerning the affairs of religion was merely an interpretation of the law as to silence, and the king spoke of the characteristics and effects of the bull Unigenitus in a manner that was too theological, and not sufficiently correct. This declaration, so far, was not likely to meet with any difficulty in parliament; but the ruling that changed the internal discipline of that body was certain to excite the very deepest opposition.

The whole was registered by authority. The *lit de justice* over, nearly all the magistrates who composed the parliament gave in their resignation to the chief-president, who made no great resistance to arrest a step so injurious to the king, and so prejudicial to the public; a small number of the presidents and counsellors of the grand-chamber promised to fulfil their functions; but how could so small a number do the work of the whole body?

The king went off to the château de la Muette, and all

the ministers dispersed to their country-houses. The startling character of the course taken by parliament enlightened the Keeper of the Seals, and made him see the depth of the abyss into which he had plunged the State and himself; his courage began to abandon him, and M. d'Argenson then saw the ruin of his rival secured. The trouble became extreme in Paris; when parliament ceases its functions some twenty thousand persons are brought to the verge of famine; the race of attorneys and scribes is intermediate between the bourgeoisie and the people, and its agitation soon stirred the whole of Paris.

Mme. de Pompadour, three days after the holding of the *lit de justice*, sent me an express asking me, from the king, for my opinion as to the conduct that should be adopted under the circumstances. I answered that it was necessary to do to-day what they would be compelled to do six months hence, and then with much greater annoyance and difficulty; that the king ought to send for the chief-president, order him to re-assemble parliament in the grand-chamber, and declare to the assembly that his Majesty willed him to tear up in their presence all the resignations, and leave no vestige of so precipitate an action, one so contrary to the oath which each member of parliament had taken, and so opposed to the spirit of the magistracy, and to the respect that was due to the king; that his Majesty was very willing to regard this act as one of mistaken zeal; that he ordered his parliament to resume its usual functions, and, as he desired to be enlightened, he would receive the representations of his parliament on the laws he had just given.

That course would have saved all; a few changes would have been made in the edicts and declarations, and all things would have returned to their accustomed order. The king and his Council at first approved of so reasonable

an action, but a ministerial intrigue prevented its adoption. The confusion and license then became extreme, and on the fifth of January, 1757, the attempt to assassinate the king took place (I shall speak of that horrible event later).

The assassination of the king determined a great number of the counsellors and presidents of parliament to write a pathetic letter to the chancellor, begging him to say to his Majesty that, solely occupied by their grief, moved only by the desire to please him, and give him marks of their zeal, they were ready to resume their functions: this first decent and very proper letter I have seen and read. But an ambitious magistrate, acting in collusion with an intriguing minister, caused this first letter to be changed, and replaced by a second, which was much less becoming than the first. The king's Council discussed what answer should be made to the letter. I insisted strongly that the chancellor should answer favourably on the king's behalf, without quibbling over equivocal expressions; the serious interests involved being of more importance than the form. My opinion was opposed by the plurality; it even gave me, with some of the Court, an air of being too favourable to parliament. In a word, it was decided, against all policy and prudence, that the chancellor should reply with a haughtiness and stiffness that chilled the zeal of the magistrates, and gave rise to an anarchy which reigned in public matters from that time until September, 1757.

How could intrigue prevail to such a point against sense and reason? We were in the midst of a maritime war; we were about to throw ourselves into a continental war; we had no money; we dared not leave the people to suffer, the city of Paris in agitation, all the parliaments of France in a ferment; and yet, here we were depriving ourselves of the indispensable help of financial edicts at a time when

the king was taking upon himself the most costly engagements! The ministers went farther still; they proposed to the king (in spite of the resistance I made to so unjust and useless an action) to select from among the magistrates who had given their resignations sixteen of those most distinguished for their talents, and these were exiled and punished personally for what was the fault of all; and, moreover, they roused his Majesty to declare publicly that these sixteen magistrates would never be allowed to resume the functions of their office. What blunders! what imprudence! Each minister thought himself authorized to negotiate with parliament; M. Berryer, of the council of despatches, and the chief-president, agreeing in public, but secretly rivals, broke up all the measures of the other negotiators to arrogate to themselves the honour of the affair; both aspired to the office of Keeper of the Seals, and both enjoyed the confidence of Mme. de Pompadour.

As for me, who had never lived among men of the long robe, I was reduced to giving my opinion in the Council; but before long several distinguished members of parliament addressed themselves personally to me. The first who came to see me was a counsellor named Mercier de la Rivière, since intendant of Martinique; he had good intentions and talents, but not much influence in the Assembly. MM. Molé, Joly de Fleury, and d'Ormesson opened themselves to me soon after with as much zeal and more resources. They represented to me the necessity of calling parliament together; they assured me that the assembly was disposed to place great confidence in me, through the opinion of my integrity and loyalty which I had won from the public. The king allowed me to treat with these magistrates; meantime M. de Moras, controller-general, M. de Maupeou, M. Berryer, and several others, not counting the Prince de Conti

(who had hitherto been the man between the king and parliament), were entangling their negotiations, or rather intrigues, which crossed, re-crossed, and contradicted one another, and had no other result than to lower the royal authority.

However, my negotiation with M. Molé, President d'Ormesson, and the solicitor-general began to take colour. I obtained permission from the king for the members of parliament to assemble at the houses of their seniors, and thence to issue a species of declaration manifesting the desire they had to resume their functions and to give the king proof of their zeal and obedience. This memorial was drawn up and approved by the greater number of the counsellors and was brought to me by President Molé for presentation to the king. His Majesty seemed satisfied with it; but I made him observe that the expressions at the end were not sufficiently respectful; it was a question of changing them, and this was agreed to; but the chief-president, who did not wish that MM. Molé, d'Ormesson, and de Fleury should have the honour of terminating so important an affair, sent missives everywhere advising that nothing be changed, as they were already assured of the king's approbation. This miserable intrigue made my negotiation a failure.

I then advised the king to forbid his ministers from treating in future with the members of parliament, in order to cut, for a time, the root and branch of so many intrigues, and to resume negotiations later under better auspices and with more dignity. The anarchy in civil matters then began again; the lawyers refused to plead, and the grand-chamber concerned itself with nothing but the Damiens affair and the return of its members.

This was the situation when in July, 1757, M. Boullongne,

who had succeeded M. de Moras as controller-general of the finances, having no longer any resources with which to meet the costs of the war and the subsidies, made the king feel the absolute necessity of calling parliament together in order to register the financial edicts and procure the indispensable money. What I had foreseen happened; they were now forced to do what I had proposed they should do of their own free will three days after the *lit de justice* in 1756. His Majesty charged me with arranging the affair of assembling parliament with the presidents Molé and d'Ormesson and the king's lawyers.

I succeeded in reuniting parliament by the simplicity of the plan I followed, by the solidity of the principles from which I started, and by the truth and candour with which I negotiated with the four magistrates I have already mentioned. It must be said, to their praise, that they put great zeal for the State and a probity worthy of their character and their office into this affair, on which depended, I dare to say so, the safety of the State; for England regarded the cessation of our courts of law and our intestinal discords as powerful auxiliaries in the war she was making upon us, and I have the proof that she spared neither money nor intrigues to increase the heat of our divisions. It was to be expected that the other parliaments would cease to administer justice if the king did not reinstate in their offices the dismissed members and the sixteen exiled counsellors. Everybody knew that the necessary resources to support the war and meet indispensable expenditures would come to an end in a very short time. It was in this critical situation that I formed my plan. Here are the simple principles on which I relied:—

Parliament has force only through that of the voice of the people; the fermentations in its assemblies are nothing if

not supported by a public fermentation. Therefore the Court, by convincing the public of the justice and kindness of the king, disarmed the parliaments. As soon as Paris says that the king is right, parliament has to obey; its resistance is not only useless, but it becomes as irritating to the public as it has been to the Court. Parliaments must yield as soon as they are abandoned by the public. This truth, confirmed by experience, determined me to fix upon a plan, in concert with the three magistrates I have already named, analogous to those principles.

The king had consented formally, though with regret and from necessity, to the return of the sixteen exiled members. Either he had to break all the treaties he had contracted with the chief powers of Europe and withdraw his armies from Germany, or he must obtain money to support them and to pay the agreed subsidies. The controller-general, M. Boullongne, whose genius was neither fruitful nor very enlightened, saw no resource except in the verification and registration of financial edicts. Parliament must, therefore, be re-established. But that assembly would have refused the registration of the edicts so long as its sixteen members were exiled, or at any rate until a pledge was given for their return. The king was therefore forced to grant that hope; I obtained that it should depend on the good-will of the king, and that the time of the recall of the sixteen should not be fixed. This point was difficult to settle, because all the magistrates distrusted the Court and feared that after they had obeyed the king's will their colleagues would be left to languish in exile unless a period were fixed for their return. But I threatened to abandon the negotiation if they did not consent to make it in keeping with the power and independence of his Majesty.

It was agreed that the king should order his parliament

to assemble on such a day in its grand-chamber; that the king's lawyers should then carry to it a *lettre de cachet*, commanding parliament to be at Versailles at a certain hour on the same day, to listen to the king's orders. The sending of the king's lawyers and the tenor of the *lettre de cachet* were to remain secret; and, above all, the chief-president was not to be informed until he had actually taken his seat in the chamber; this secrecy was carefully observed, and it saved the affair. When the members of the grand-chamber reached Versailles the chancellor was to pronounce in the king's name a discourse in which his Majesty would speak more as a father than as a master; and while this was going on at Versailles immense quantities of the chancellor's speech were to be distributed in Paris, even in the cafés, theatres, and on the public promenades, in order that Paris, before the return of parliament, should have time to change its opinion on the inflexibility of the Court and do justice to the kindness and good intentions of the king; so that parliament, returning to the grand-chamber, should find the scene changed and the disposition of the public mind totally reversed. I knew that such a revolution is the work of a moment when excitement has passed and lassitude begins to take its place; all men are susceptible of these variations, but Frenchmen more than others.

That is the simple machinery on which I built my edifice of a negotiation on the success of which depended the fate of the war and the internal tranquillity of the nation.

I did not doubt that in changing the opinion of Paris the resistance of parliament would be brought to an end. I even announced it to the king, who had not much faith, neither had Mme. de Pompadour, in the success of my negotiation. The draft of the discourse to be delivered by the chancellor, M. de Lamoignon (man of integrity, frank, and

good citizen), was determined on; also the tenor of the *lettre de cachet* which the king's lawyers were to deliver to the assembly in the grand-chamber. But meantime intrigues were multiplying, the minds of the parliament grew more and more bitter, until at last the fermentation became so violent that my three negotiators lost heart on the eve of the battle. In fact, it all seemed desperate. When the session in the grand-chamber was called, members took oaths not to be present, and to refuse to deliberate. I was warned by couriers of this excitement, and I went to Paris at once to reassure the generals of my little army. I heard from them that no one as yet knew that parliament was to be summoned to Versailles, and also that the coming speech of the chancellor was still unrevealed. "You think all is lost, gentlemen," I said to them; "but to-morrow all will be won." They told me afterwards that they were astonished at my courage; for if the affair had failed they were lost, and I should equally have lost my credit and influence. I was at that moment charged with the affairs of Europe, and the events of a war of which I was thought to be the author rolled entirely upon me.

The crisis came the next day, September 1, 1757; it was most violent, both at Court and in parliament. M. Berryer gave Mme. de Pompadour to understand that the king must order the discourse of the chancellor to be examined before it was delivered, that very day, to parliament. MM. d'Argenson and de Machault had been exiled some months; the Council was not numerous, nor was it favourable to the negotiation I had now brought so near to its goal, and, against the advice of the chancellor, that of M. de Saint-Florentin and my own, it voted by a plurality to change the whole form of the discourse, to make it threatening instead of paternal; they desired to make Louis XIV. speak, not

Henri IV.; instead of soothing minds in Paris and in parliament it seemed as if they were resolved to exasperate them.

At nine o'clock in the morning these corrections were made. Parliament was to be at Versailles at five in the afternoon; the whole safety of the affair lay in the moderation of the speech of the chancellor. I took good care not to let my negotiators in Paris know of this total upsetting of all our measures; but I profited by certain bad news which arrived from the grand-chamber to persuade the king to replace the speech of the chancellor in its first integrity.

In truth, from hour to hour, the news grew worse; the excitement in the chamber was very great. M. de Maupeou seemed endeavouring to pacify the clamour, but did not succeed. The king, to whom I reported all that was taking place, repeated to me constantly, "I told you you were too confident." At last the king's lawyers entered the grand-chamber, and the deputation was appointed. It was then that I decided the chancellor and M. de Saint-Florentin to go to the king and represent to him that it was playing the State on a toss-up, and risking all for a few pedantic phrases, to change the tenor of the speech. I accompanied them, and spoke with such force that the king yielded, after the dauphin, who had been much opposed up to that moment to the negotiation, had given his opinion, and that opinion was very wise. Thus the speech I had concerted with the three members of parliament was again resolved upon, and couriers distributed about Paris three thousand copies of it as soon as the deputation from parliament had started for Versailles.[1]

The deputation listened to the speech in gloomy silence; after it was over not a word could they be made to say. But when parliament met again after the return of its deputation the scene had changed; by that time it was openly said in

[1] See Appendix III.

Paris that if parliament did not respond to the king's kindness it deserved his indignation and that of the people. The wiser heads were then enabled to get control over the excited ones; parliament resumed its functions and ordered representations to be made on the third declaration, concerning the interior discipline of the assembly; the two other declarations remained untouched and were executed according to their form and tenor.

The king replied that he would willingly receive the memorials his parliament would address to him on the subject of his third declaration; these memorials were never presented, and things returned, in this respect, to just what they were before the holding of the *lit de justice*. Hence it results that the will of the king is in a great measure executed.

His Majesty, much pleased at the success I had had in this great affair, was not ignorant of how thwarted I had been throughout the negotiation. The cabal tried to take away from me all merit by instigating parliament to demand the return of the sixteen exiles vehemently. To cut short these demands I advised the king to answer the deputation from parliament that the chambers ought to enjoy tranquilly the return of his good-will, which they would cease to deserve if they doubted it. His Majesty shut their mouths by letting them know that the return of their colleagues was certain; and he made them feel at the same time that they were wanting in the respect that was due to him by demanding that the period of this return should be fixed.

Parliament insisted no longer; its usual work began once more, the laws were administered, justice was rendered to the people, the fermentation ceased, and England, which had counted on the results of this agitation, began to reckon as

able the minister who had conjured away the storm; whereas at Versailles a part of the Court, and Mme. de Pompadour at its head, reproached me for having weakened the authority of the king. Was it my fault that the king had been induced to hold a *lit de justice* so unwisely? that he was advised to seize sixteen magistrates for a fault common to the whole parliament? that his controller-general, at the opening of a maritime and continental war, was without resources, and was obliged to have financial edicts registered? It is a maxim of good politics that small considerations shall yield to great interests; the king always appears to advantage in pardoning; and if his authority was weakened in his contest with parliament, it was when his Majesty, having exiled it to Pontoise and vainly endeavoured to put in its place a royal chamber, allowed it to return without conditions and without giving any external sign of obedience.

M. de Maupeou, as I foresaw, having proclaimed that he had taken no part in the negotiation, found himself out of countenance and asked to retire; M. Molé, a man of integrity and good birth took his place. Mme. de Pompadour continued to M. de Maupeou an esteem of which she gave him striking proof five years later, on the death of M. Berryer, who ended his career of minister of the navy and Keeper of the Seals under public and private aversion. I shall have occasion to speak later of this minister.

As soon as M. Molé was at the head of parliament the aspect of things changed; nothing was done without agreement; affairs were discussed before they were taken to the general assembly of the chambers; the course of studies in theology at the Sorbonne, long interrupted, was re-established; a great number of exiles were recalled; benefices were made the reward of prudence as well as of piety; the Archbishop of Paris, exiled to Conflans, was recalled to the

capital (we shall see later what were the results of my negotiations with him); the waves of parliament were stilled; the edicts of the king were registered with obedience and zeal; confidence was re-established within and without the assembly. The enemies of France applauded, in spite of themselves, this fortunate change; but mine, on the contrary, persisted in declaring that I should have done better had I exposed the person of the king a second time to fanaticism, broken the treaties made with all Europe, recalled our armies from the Rhine — in short, had I risked everything rather than bring back sixteen members of parliament who had resigned with the rest, and whose only personal crime was that of having more credit in their chambers than others for eloquence or superiority of mind.

As for me I was, on the contrary, in favour of choosing among those sixteen magistrates intendants for our colonies and for our provinces. A counsellor of parliament who has merit, and feels he has it, has nothing to hope from fortune; his fate is fixed where it is. Neither fear nor hope can act upon him; he is shielded by the ægis of parliament, which is his only judge, which protects him under dismissal and insists on his recall. But his office subjects him to a hard, laborious, and retired life; no salary, no distinction is attached to his labour; he must seek, necessarily, to gain through reputation what he cannot hope to gain from fortune; and this reputation never has more brilliancy than when he determines his assembly to resist the Court in matters which concern religion or the welfare of the people. Consequently, every magistrate of genius is likely to be in the party of the opposition until it pleases the government to open to MM. the counsellors and the presidents that door to fortune of which his Majesty carries the key in his pocket. It is thus that the king, by rewarding merit in his parliament,

might make those eloquent lips speak in his favour which now open only to restrain him. Hope is the first motive power of men, fear is the second; when men can be assured of great places and great fortunes by taking sides with the Court the king will be sure of their obedience so long as the fundamental laws of justice are not violated. Thus, if the Court wishes to govern the sovereign courts it must open careers to the able men who compose them; it must, before sending an edict or a declaration for registration by the chambers, communicate its substance to their wisest members; time must be given to answer objections, to familiarize minds with novelties, or with certain contradictions between new laws and former ones.

It is impossible that a numerous assembly can be of one mind on wholly new matters (often ill-digested) about which the Court has not deigned to inform them previously; all the resistances of parliament have come from this want of communication and concert of minds. You cannot govern enlightened men except by reason and by confidence; the corruption which the Court often seeks to employ is a dreadful method, ruinous to morals, and does more harm to the government which employs it than to those whose integrity that government debases.

It was with these maxims that I directed for two years the affairs of parliament. That assembly, I may dare to say it, placed such confidence in me that I could have answered to the king at all times for its good conduct, had it pleased his Majesty to confide its direction to me for a longer period.

VIII.

1757. — That which happened a few Days after my Entrance into the Council of State. — The Crime of Damiens. — The Dismissal of MM. d'Argenson and de Machault. — The Conclusion of definite Arrangements with the Court of Vienna.

I ENTERED the Council, January 2, 1757; I was present at the Council of State, and the next day at that of the despatches. In the interval, I had with a minister, a man of intelligence, now dead some years, a conversation which struck me, from the picture of horrors he made me foresee in the near future; he exhorted me to bring to bear, in those circumstances, all the firmness, courage, and probity he believed me to possess. I confess that I then applied these tragic reflections of the minister only to the disorder in the finances, the evils of the war just then beginning, and the vices of the government. He did not like Mme. de Pompadour, and I thought that these prophecies were a satire against her credit and influence. Perhaps he may have had in view none but those things, and it was this consideration which prevented me, after the misfortune of January 5th, from giving an account of this singular conversation. Nevertheless, it has always remained in my head, and I now have difficulty in repressing the suspicion that the minister had some vague idea of the attempt which was about to be made against the person of the king; he may have feared it in a general way, without knowing anything positive, — for I do not accuse him of the guilt of keeping silence, had he possessed any real knowledge.

For a long time threatening letters had been written; but such letters are common in times of public excitement; it is not surprising that no notice was taken of them. Some time before the catastrophe of January 5th, species of hieroglyphics drawn on paper were flung about; on some of them was a broom and a dagger. After the event, this emblem was interpreted as having meant: "Sweep out the Court (that is, the mistress), stab the king." Many persons remarked that before the assassination of Henri IV. the same sort of letters had been written, announcing in general some sinister event. All such remarks are easy to make after the event; nevertheless, I think that a wise government ought to pay more attention to the circumstances that give rise to them; perhaps if some lively search had been made for the writers of those anonymous letters, and the designers of the emblematical figures scattered among the notaries of Paris, this horrible drama might have been discovered, or at least averted.

However that may be, I had slept in Paris on the night of January 4th, and I should have reached Versailles at the moment when the crime was committed, had my carriage been ready when I asked for it. M. Rouillé was awaiting me at Versailles, to give me the despatches which were to be taken to the Council of State on the 6th. As I got out of my carriage at his door, his porter told me abruptly that the king had been murdered half an hour earlier. My blood turned back into my heart; I was silent for a moment; then I asked the man if the king were dead; he told me no, but very bad. The Court was then at Trianon, and Versailles was almost deserted. I went up to the king's apartments, making as I went all the reflections that could be made by a minister attacked by jealousies, charged with important affairs, who had many enemies, and for sole

friendship that of a woman — and that woman likely, according to all appearances, to be driven from Court within a few hours. These reflections came into my mind with singular rapidity and clearness, and as I mounted the stairs to the king's chamber I resolved to be a faithful minister in the strictest sense, and a courageous friend to the marquise, without allowing my personal interests to affect my duty or my sentiments.

I felt, as I entered the king's cabinet, a presence of mind and a courage that were almost supernatural; all extraordinary events arouse the soul, and double its forces. I had inwardly resolved, as I crossed the courtyard and mounted the marble staircase which leads to the king's antechamber, that if that prince died of his wound I would request the dauphin, then king, to permit me to retire from the Council, and resign my place as minister; there would still remain to me that of counsellor of State, and the Abbey of Saint-Médard; those were enough for a younger son of Languedoc, whom circumstances, and not ambition, had raised higher. The dauphin was Mme. de Pompadour's enemy; he knew me then under the prejudice of my attachment to her; by asking for my retirement in the first moments of his reign I should avert the storm to which that intimacy exposed me. Either he would permit me to retire at once, or he would order me to remain in the Council until the important affairs now in my hands, both within and without the kingdom, could be handed over to ministers more acceptable to his Majesty. In the first case, I should be very happy, at forty-two years of age, as a counsellor of State with an abbey of thirty thousand francs a year; in the second case, I should persistently entreat the new king to grant me leave to retire; possibly, on knowing me better, he might retain me, or he would send me away

without disgrace, as an honest man who did justice to himself, and to whom no reproach could be made.

As soon as I had chosen this course, and I chose it instantly, I felt myself full of strength and courage. I resolved to serve the king and the State at so critical a moment without looking either to the right or to the left, and to give to the marquise every proof of my friendship, so far as it was compatible with the duties of my ministry.

On entering the king's cabinet, I saw the extreme-unction on the table and the priests in surplices; such was the first sight that struck my eyes. Those ministers who had not the right of entrance were assembled in the cabinet; the Maréchal de Belleisle and M. d'Argenson were alone in his Majesty's chamber with the royal family. After inquiring about the moment of the catastrophe and the state of the king, which at that time seemed very doubtful, I heard that he had confessed to a priest of the Grand-Commun; and that a messenger had been despatched for his usual confessor, Père Desmarets, a Jesuit, a tranquil man, at any rate in appearance. I found the Court more occupied with what was to happen to Mme. de Pompadour than with the dreadful attack on the king. "Would she go? would he see her again?" — those were the questions on which the attention of the Court seemed principally fixed.

I went down to her; she flung herself into my arms with cries and sobs that would have touched the heart of her enemies, if the heart of courtiers were ever touched. I begged her firmly to collect all the forces of her soul, to expect all, and to submit herself to Providence; adding that she must not give way to timid counsels; that as the king's friend, and no longer, for several years, his mistress, she ought to await his orders before leaving the Court; that, being the depositary of State secrets and of the king's papers,

she could not dispose of her person; that I would inform her hourly of the king's condition, and that I would divide my time between what I owed to the State and friendship.

I left her after saying these words, and returned to comfort her every hour of the night, which I passed wholly with the king, and after that, twenty times a day while his illness lasted.

The greatest seigneurs attached to the marquise, and the ministers who were her friends consulted me as to the manner in which they should behave to her at this crisis; alleging that the more zeal they showed her, the more they increased the hatred of her enemies and the activity of the cabal which was seeking to profit by the tragic event to drive her from Court. I answered that courtiers who had neither obligations to Mme. de Pompadour nor friendship for her would do well to behave like the weathercock on the château of Versailles; but that her true friends should appear still more so at a moment so terrible for her, the only one, perhaps, in which they could show their gratitude for the services she had done to them; that as for myself, I should act in that way, and I believed there was less to fear in being an open friend than a shamefaced and hidden one.

My feeling was not adopted by every one; they saw her but little, and took their time in paying her attentions. M. de Machault, especially, showed on this occasion a timid and embarrassed behaviour which made him suspected of compromising with the opposite side. It was even thought at Court that he advised Mme. de Pompadour to retire; but that is false; for I inquired about it from herself. He dared not, one day when the king called him during his illness, report immediately to Mme. de Pompadour, as he was accustomed to do, what had passed between his Majesty and himself; and this was the more extraordinary as the

conversation related to her. He thought himself bound to postpone till the next day informing her of this interview with the king, although I had made him feel that he was leaving the king's friend and his own too long upon the rack. He answered, with his usual cold air and laconic speech, that it would be remarked by the Court.

It must be admitted that after the first moments of tender grief and despair the marquise showed great courage and apparent tranquillity during the eleven days when the king left her without a single consoling word. His Majesty was watched by the whole Court and by his whole family; he kept watch upon himself under circumstances in which he may well have made dark reflections. But inasmuch as he had not sent his favourite away during the first day after his attempted assassination, the Court ought to have comprehended that he would not do so when his danger was passed; religion had great power over the king, but nature has even more over all men. The king knew that the marquise was only his friend, and he believed that if reparation of the scandal required him to separate from her it need be done at the last moment only. She was the depositary of the secrets of his soul; she knew intimately all his affairs; she was the centre of his ministers; she was not a mistress, to be sent away; she was a friend, whom no one could replace. We judge kings severely, but they are men like us; why have less indulgence for them than for ourselves? Grace alone can triumph in our hearts over friendship, and grace does not always do miracles.

It must be agreed that if the marquise were spoiled by good fortune, if she had made herself too free with supreme grandeur and omnipotence, she had time during those eleven days to come back to a sense of her nothingness. But the danger over, reflections vanished; she seated herself once

more upon the throne with as much, and perhaps more security than before, as we shall see in the sequel.

I shall not detail here all that passed during the king's illness and the trial of the parricide Damiens. I shall choose a few facts more connected with my private history than with general history; and to begin, I shall say that an hour after entering the king's cabinet I was struck with the idleness in which the ministers were left, with the liberty in which every one was allowed to look at the wretch who had struck at the king; the same thing had happened in the case of Ravaillac, to whom any person was free to talk for many hours. I expressed my surprise to the ministers at so dangerous a neglect, and at an inaction which would surely be regarded as criminal by the public; for it was of the utmost importance to profit by the first moments after the crime to discover accomplices, to arrest suspected men and unknown persons who might endeavour to leave the kingdom; it was not less important to reassure the public, especially the city of Paris, so given to excitement and to tranquillize our allies on the eve of a general war.

All the ministers agreed to the justice of these reflections, but they all answered that the king alone and the dauphin, to whom the king had said, "I make you my lieutenant; assemble the council and preside over it, if necessary," could give the orders. I even saw that the principal ministers, afraid of getting into some trouble themselves, were retiring to their homes. I then decided to ask to speak to Maréchal de Belleisle and to Comte d'Argenson, who were in the king's room. I told them of my reflections; but I found them not at all disposed to set the dauphin in action; for fear perhaps that the king, after his recovery, might be inwardly displeased with them for allowing his son to play so important a part. It showed little knowledge of the king,

and little feeling for the welfare of the State, to give way to such caution at such a moment. In vain I represented to them that the dauphin, wholly occupied with the king's state and his own grief, could not foresee the inconveniences that would arise from the inaction of the Council, and that if the king died of his wound, nothing could justify the government for having allowed the thread of this odious conspiracy to be lost.

M. d'Argenson said that I spoke as a true minister; "but," he added, "who is to take the initiative?" "You, monsieur," I said; "you are in the king's room with the dauphin." The answers of the count and the maréchal were alike. "We fulfil our duty," they agreed in saying, "when, under critical circumstances, we are ready to execute orders, without forestalling them." Impatience got the better of me. "Yes, gentlemen," I said, "that is enough to save us from being ruined, but not enough to fulfil the duties of a ministry." All my representations were useless.

Then, seeing that precious time was being lost, I got the Baron de Montmorency, my relation and old friend, to ask Madame Adélaïde, whose gentleman of honour he was, to make the dauphine see how important it was for the safety of the king, the good of the State, and the dauphin's reputation, that the latter should assemble the Council to consult on the measures to be taken both within and without the kingdom. The commission was well-executed. A few moments later the dauphin came out from the king's room, and addressing himself to me and to MM. de Moras and de Paulmy, he asked if we thought that the Council ought to be assembled. "Undoubtedly, monseigneur," I replied; "it was never more important to summon them." "But," said the dauphin, "the other ministers are not here." "Give your orders, monseigneur, and they will be here." The dau-

phin then returned to the king's room, took the orders of his Majesty to assemble the ministers, and gave them to the Maréchal de Richelieu, the gentleman of the Bedchamber on service.

The Council assembled in the king's inner cabinet. The dauphin explained with dignity and tenderness for his father, and with the greatest precision, the objects on which the Council was to deliberate. He questioned me first on my opinion, as I was the last to enter the Council. I do not know if I deserved the praises given to the detail I made of the measures that ought to be taken in the kingdom and towards foreign countries, but my plan was unanimously adopted; perhaps because the ministers were very glad not to take anything upon themselves in circumstances so critical. However that may be, from that moment the dauphin conceived an esteem for my character and the turn of my mind, and also a liking of which he gave me flattering proofs until his death.

Another Council was called for the morrow; and after that there was one daily, also committees with the chancellor, and a very secret one with the Keeper of the Seals. I shall not say here what passed, but I cannot refrain from speaking of certain circumstances that occurred.

The majority of the council was of opinion that Damiens ought to be tried by a commission of counsellors of the State and masters of petitions. I was strongly opposed to this. The commission was already chosen. M. d'Argenson and the Keeper of the Seals maintained that it was the only course to take. The grand-chamber of parliament was notified of this; President Molé and the king's lawyers came out to Versailles to ask an explanation of the chancellor M. de Lamoignon, who told them plainly that such was his opinion. These gentlemen met me and told me what they had heard

from the chancellor's own lips. I took upon myself to say that either they had ill understood him, or the chancellor had explained himself badly; that nothing was decided, and that the king had confidence in the fidelity of the grand-chamber of his parliament.

I had, a few hours earlier, met the Keeper of the Seals at Mme. de Pompadour's, and I had made him feel how such a commission on the king's assassination would rouse the suspicions of the people. He cited examples, which I refuted; and I gave him so great a fear of consequences that he changed his opinion and made several others change theirs. When the Council met, I spoke strongly in favour of carrying the trial by letters patent to the grand-chamber; this plan was adopted. They wished that the princes and peers should assist, and that seemed decent and reasonable at first sight, though the inconveniences were felt later.

I suppress a great number of curious anecdotes, because nothing is more dangerous in regard to the assassination of a king than to relate facts which put ideas into the minds of villains. For this reason I opposed with all my strength the printed publication of Damiens' trial. That wretch was well informed on the slightest circumstance of Ravaillac's trial. The monsters who resemble the latter take lessons of firmness and adroitness from his printed record; besides which, the public was never satisfied about the interrogations on that trial, which left an odious ambiguity over the affair. As for me, I shall not say what I think. It is possible that a villain who believes he has personal cause to complain of the king may conceive the idea of killing him and braving the peril he runs and the horrible punishment that awaits him; he may have the audacity to execute his project; revenge may blind a man to that point; but fanaticism alone arms regicides who have no other motive than

to do (according to their way of thinking) good service to religion and the public.

During Damiens' trial and for some time after, those about the king did not cease to show him threatening letters and atrocious and seditious placards, and to warn him of other conspiracies. They wanted to frighten him; he had not sent away the marquise, and they wanted to force him into it through the dread of being stabbed again. I have heard the king, after reading one of those dreadful letters, speak with a coolness, firmness, and reason above all praise.

During his illness he treated me with the greatest kindness, and with a confidence which binds me to him by ties that nothing can break or weaken. The royal family allowed me to approach his bed, being convinced that I would give him no bad advice. I had declared to Mme. de Pompadour that if the king spoke to me of her and asked my advice I should endeavour to avoid giving it; but that if the king exacted it of my honesty I could not prevent myself from telling him that he was bound to regard her and treat her eternally as a friend, but that he ought to put an end to scandal by no longer living with her in close familiarity. No doubt she did not love me the more for thinking thus, but it did not prevent her from esteeming me more.

It is remarkable that the king, who called me to him as soon as I entered the room, and who affected to talk to me in a low voice about his family, his affairs, his griefs, never once mentioned Mme. de Pompadour's name. He had often said to me, in speaking of Madame Infanta, "She has confidence in you, and she is right, for you are indeed a very honest man." Perhaps it was this idea of honesty which made the king fear that if he asked me the truth as to things that were near his heart I might have the courage to tell it to him.

The Comtesse de Toulouse, who had friendship for me, was charged, she told me, by the royal family (after the king was out of danger) to induce me to advise the marquise to retire, adding that this retirement would not diminish the king's confidence and friendship, would secure to her at all times the protection of the dauphin, and cover her with glory in the eyes of Europe. I answered that if I were only the private friend of Mme. de Pompadour I would willingly accept the commission, and I had a sufficiently good opinion of her to feel sure that this commission would be well received; but as minister of the king, I could not without knowing his intentions give advice of that nature to a person who was dear to him, and who, moreover, was the depositary of all the secrets of State. This answer satisfied them; it was, in truth, that of reason and justice.

At the end of eleven days the king wrote to Mme. de Pompadour. Intrigues and intriguers were disconcerted; everybody now tried to make his peace with one who, from that moment took a much greater ascendency and a far more important part than she had ever yet had in affairs of State. The courageous friendship I had shown to her went without reward. She said to me one day that I was very shrewd, inasmuch as I had found a way to enchant the royal family while giving to her the most unequivocal marks of attachment. That reflection, so full of sourness, jealousy, and distrust, filled me with indignation. I replied that it proved that the more a man was honest, the more he was sure of pleasing the royal family. She felt her injustice, and tried to repair it.

Before ending my account of this sad affair, I wish, in order to enliven it, to relate a thing which happened one evening in the king's chamber. Three days after the attempt at assassination, all the courtiers entered while his

Majesty took his bouillon; I entered too, among the crowd. Père Desmarets, the king's confessor, saw me as I was struggling through the throng to approach the king's bed. "Come this way," he said, "and I will show you a place where, although you will be behind everybody, the king will see you the moment his curtains are opened." It seemed to me impossible, but he insisted, and I let him place me. Sure enough, I was directly opposite the opening of the king's curtain, and he called me at once; whence I conclude that his confessor is well versed in the laws of optics.

After this, I persuaded Mme. de Pompadour to get the dauphin admitted to the Council of State; he was not ignorant that he owed this to me.

For the last five or six years the marquise had employed all her influence, all the manœuvres of M. Berryer, lieutenant of police, and all the adroitness of M. de Machault to induce the king to dismiss Comte d'Argenson. That minister had intellect, was agreeable, possessed a noble presence, and had conducted himself better than all the other ministers during the king's illness at Metz; in addition, he was not wanting in the quality of intrigue, and was not slow in using it. I had often advised him to be reconciled with the marquise, but always in vain; he was profoundly sunk in the common error of ministers who have been favourites, and who therefore believe they will always be loved. Whether from pride, or from his conviction of the king's good-will, he rejected all offers that were made to him from time to time to come to terms with the marquise.

After the attack upon the king, seeing that she was no longer satisfied with the Keeper of the Seals, I again urged her to be reconciled with M. d'Argenson; I made her comprehend how much she would comfort the king by no longer importuning him against a minister whom his Majesty

thought necessary, or whose services, at any rate, were agreeable to him; I insisted on the good that would result to the war, then about to begin in Germany, from a true harmony between herself and the secretary of State for war, and on the great evils that might result from the lack of it. After arguing the matter for a long time, she yielded to my reasons, and made me her ambassador to M. d'Argenson, charging me to assure him of the desire she had to live on good terms with him for love of the king, and for the benefit of his affairs.

The whole Court now saw that as the king had not sent away the marquise at the moment of the assault upon him, she would certainly have more influence than ever, especially as it was now known that the Empress Maria Theresa had addressed her in regard to obtaining the treaty with France. Nothing of all that seemed to strike Comte d'Argenson; he saw in the advances of the marquise only the last efforts of a drowning person endeavouring to cling where she could. I saw his error, and tried in vain to correct it by representing to him that he risked nothing, if he declared to the king that he reconciled himself with Mme. de Pompadour solely out of respect for his Majesty, and for the benefit of his affairs; that this reconciliation could not prevent the king from dismissing the marquise if he wished to do so; but that it certainly sheltered himself from the revenge of a woman who was very powerful if she retained her influence; "for," I said, "the stronger the advances she has made to you, the less she will forgive you if you despise them." I did not conceal from him that it was only with much trouble that I had brought Mme. de Pompadour to desire this reconciliation. My words were in vain. He assured me he was prepared for all results; he had been made to bear all sorts of indignities, and was well-accustomed to

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them. "But you are a clever man," he said; "make a civil answer to her for me."

I did so; and, in consequence, Mme. de Pompadour sent for Comte d'Argenson, and spoke to him with some ardour. He answered her with irony, in a jesting manner. He saw that she was about to get rid of M. de Machault, his enemy, he despised her, and he did not wish to make himself dependent on her. I should have comprehended this manner of thinking as being justly proud, if he had not been so attached to his office, and if he had been more philosophical than ambitious; self-love is blinding. He could not conceive that the marquise, after vainly endeavouring to cause his ruin, would bring herself to have recourse to him unless she had thought that step necessary to strengthen her tottering influence. I now saw, by a few words dropped by chance, that Mme. de Pompadour was henceforth resolved to sacrifice everything in order to drive Comte d'Argenson from Court; and in taking this resolution she consulted the interests of her vengeance more than those of the State.

M. d'Argenson had ideas and experience; his nephew, the Marquis de Paulmy, lacked the necessary firmness to take his place at the opening of a war in which so many interests were to clash. The dismissal of M. d'Argenson caused, in a great measure, the disasters that came upon us in the last war. He never desired the success of the Treaty of Versailles, but, for the sake of his own reputation, he would have conducted the war well, and checked the license and insubordination which reigned in our armies.

It must also be said that the dismissal of M. de Machault was done at the wrong moment. That minister was sufficiently well trained in the affairs of the navy; the officers respected him and even loved him. Certainly M. de Moras, whom I believe to be an honest man, was not in a condition

to take his place; for M. de Machault had the presence, self-possession, and dignity of a minister; too little openness, perhaps, too much despotism and curtness, too pedantic an air, not enough knowledge of Europe, and too much confidence in his clerks; but these defects were balanced by intelligence, insight, adroitness, and a suitable deportment.

It is said that the marquise sacrificed him to the king to make sure of the dismissal of M. d'Argenson. I think this opinion false. The king dismissed M. d'Argenson because he was persuaded to think him a knave who, by his intrigues, was stirring up discord in Paris and at Court. His relations with the Comtesse d'Estrades did him much harm. He was also accused of not having paid enough attention to the department of Paris which was confided to him, and of having spared the authors of seditious placards. In a word, they persuaded the king that he was guilty of having tolerated disorders for the purpose of intimidating his Majesty and making him believe that as long as he kept the marquise daggers would be ready for him.

As for M. de Machault, the marquise was convinced that he had failed her during the king's illness; also that at the moment when parliament quitted its functions and sent in its resignations his head gave way; she did not blame his heart, but she believed that fear had confused and obscured his brain. Madame Infanta told me that the king, in writing to her, said that it was with much pain he dismissed the minister in whom he had most confidence, but that circumstances required it. Possibly the king was induced to believe that as long as the Keeper of the Seals was in office, parliament would never be tranquil.

However that may be, the marquise confided to me only in part the dismissal of the two ministers. I own I did not believe she could succeed in sending away M. d'Argenson at

the opening of the war. As for M. de Machault, it was plain that she could no longer endure him; she avoided being alone with him, and often detained those who, out of discretion, were about to leave them tête à tête. Here are the letters of the king dismissing the two ministers:—

February 1, 1757.

MONSIEUR DE MACHAULT: Though I am convinced of your probity and of the uprightness of your intentions, present circumstances oblige me to ask you for my Seals and for the resignation of your office as secretary of State for the navy. Be always sure of my protection and friendship. If you have any favours to ask for your children you can do so at all times. It is best that you should stay some time at Arnouville. LOUIS.

I continue your pension of 20,000 francs as minister of the navy, and your honours as Keeper of the Seals.

February 1, 1757.

MONSIEUR D'ARGENSON: Your services no longer being necessary to me, I order you to send in your resignation as secretary of State for war, also of your other offices, and retire to your estate of Les Ormes. LOUIS.

M. d'Argenson and M. de Machault were exiled on a Tuesday at the same hour, neither of them expecting the catastrophe. The king had treated them both equally well in public and in private; each inwardly believed, seeing that a storm was about to burst, that his enemy was the one who alone would be crushed. I remember that two days before his exile, M. d'Argenson said to me: "You are playing the mysterious, but you know very well that Machault is packing up; the marquise does not choose to see him; his dismissal

is the affair of a week at most." And thereupon he made jests which I thought misplaced; I even told him that I thought ministers ought never to jest on the disgrace of their colleagues, for they were often very near to it themselves; I did not think I spoke so truly.

The evening before the exile of these ministers I found the king with Mme. de Pompadour in such ill-humour, and she so sad, that I thought his Majesty must have received another threatening letter, or else that the two had quarrelled. After the king's departure she told me that the king had said nothing of what was troubling him. He had just given M. Rouillé and M. de Saint-Florentin the letters in which he dismissed the two ministers. The king always resolved with great difficulty on doing harm to any one, and above all, in dismissing an old servant. He did not inform the marquise of the orders he had given until an hour after midnight, so that she could not warn me of them; therefore the next morning when all the foreign ministers came to talk to me about the exile of MM. d'Argenson and de Machault, who had been seen, they said, starting for their estates, I maintained to them that it was not true, with all the more confidence because I had seen the king and the marquise so late the night before, and because I was too much in favour at that time not to have been informed of so important a resolution.

M. de Paulmy [son of the Marquis d'Argenson, who had died a week earlier] succeeded his uncle in the war department, in which he had been assistant-secretary of State for some years, and M. de Moras united the office of minister of the navy with that of controller-general of finances. They took those places two days later at a Council of State. M. de Moras complaining one day to the Sieur Fayet, his confidential surgeon (a bold and sometimes amusing Gascon),

that the burden was too heavy for him, Fayet replied: "So much the better, monseigneur; the more the ass is laden, the better he goes."

The misfortunes of France began at this period. The king's Council was no longer respected. The war and the navy soon felt that the hands that held the reins were too weak; license and confusion took possession of the two departments. Mme. de Pompadour, with her childlike confidence, believed that with her help all would go well; I did not think so, nor our allies either. They regarded as a capital fault the dismissal of the two ministers under present circumstances.

M. d'Argenson, on hearing of his disgrace, bore it for a time with sufficient firmness; but at the end of five years ennui laid hold of him, grief took possession of his soul, and he had a fall which completed the ruin of his physical machinery. On the death of his wife, April, 1764, he obtained permission to come to Paris and attend to his affairs. I had then returned, about six months earlier, from my own exile. I found M. d'Argenson in the grasp of death, still struggling with ambition. No sermon ever made such an impression on me as the sight of that dying minister. He said to me repeatedly, "Your fortune does not astonish me, but your return does." It is true that my return was very different from his; the king and the public had welcomed me; I had just been appointed to the archbishopric of Alby; and his Majesty had crowned that favour with all that could make it most agreeable. M. d'Argenson, on the contrary, was still exiled; he did not even hear before he died that the king had permitted him to live in Paris; his head was full of intrigues and projects while the chill of death was on his body. He died, August, 1764, with the desire to live and to reign.

M. de Machault, on the contrary, who was believed to be much more crushed by his dismissal, has given himself up to solitude. He sees few persons, but is well in health and growing fat, which is the sign of a sound head in dismissed ministers. I do not know if he has renounced all ideas of influence and power; he is still young enough to hope for them, but circumstances and the present condition of minds are not favourable to him.

Never was any negotiation so keen conducted so slowly as that of the definitive arrangements between the Court of Versailles and that of Vienna; eight whole months had been employed in constructing the Treaty of Versailles, and one year went by before the king and empress had agreed as to the object and the after results of the war. Each article was severely examined, and cost me long memorials for the discussion of matters in the Council. At last, when Comte de Staremberg and I had agreed, the totality of the work, long discussed piecemeal in the committees, was taken before the Council of State and approved unanimously by the king and his ministers. This great work, joined to troubles of mind and heart caused by the attack on the king and the jealousy of the minister, occasioned me a nervous illness the symptoms of which were much like those of a violent poison. It was in that state that I was obliged to work day and night, often without sleeping fifteen minutes consecutively. I can say that I pushed my zeal for the king's affairs almost beyond the possible, and that if I had not had the strongest constitution I could not have borne the life six months. It is true that for the next five years I felt with great violence the effects of the inward agitation and excessive labour to which I had been condemned for two years. It was in the month of March, 1757, that my health suddenly broke down as if from a thunderbolt; but it

was not until the following May, one year after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, that our last agreements with the empress were signed by M. Rouillé, myself, and the Comte de Staremberg.

Our armies had crossed the Rhine before we had come to a settled agreement, so anxious was the king to support his allies and give proofs of his good faith to the Court of Vienna. I have already stated that, before the campaign began, the negotiation for neutrality was broken off. It is known that the King of Prussia, after a battle won by a miracle, shut up nearly the whole of the empress' forces behind the walls of Prague. That army, commanded by Prince Charles of Lorraine, was not lacking in food but in powder, to the point of having only forty rounds left for each soldier. Maréchal Daun, with a rather weak army, took up a good position, where the luck and the skill of the King of Prussia were both broken, after having the advantage all day over the Austrians.[1] Maréchal Daun had given orders for his army to retire, but when that order was taken to General O'Donnell, he said he had been retreating for twenty years and was tired of it, and would do nothing of the kind that day. He accordingly ordered a charge of cavalry, which threw into disorder the Prussian cavalry and knocked over the infantry which had gained the plateau on which Maréchal Daun had drawn up his army in line of battle. The King of Prussia chose his course like a great man, and Maréchal Keith, as a good general, raised the siege of Prague. The city was only slightly injured by Prince Charles; and the Court of Vienna which, five weeks earlier had been nigh to ruin, now resumed until the end of the campaign an air of superiority over the Prussian king.

[1] Battle of Kolin, June 19, 1757. See the Prince de Ligne's account of it, Vol. V. of this Historical Series.

As for us, as soon as we had crossed the Rhine we could go no farther, for want of waggons and munitions of war. Maréchal d'Estrées, against all my representations had quarrelled with Pâris-Duverney, and he lacked the things he could have had in abundance if he had been willing to act in concert with that man of genius. Moreover, the King of Prussia by the evacuation of Wesel had disconcerted the first arrangement of our plan of campaign; we expected to lay siege to that place, which would have lasted at least six weeks, during which time means could have been prepared to march forward. The controller-general, who had begun the war without securing the necessary funds to carry it on and pay our subsidies, found himself embarrassed at the outset. The war in America was ruinous; every vessel brought letters of exchange, to pay which drained the royal treasury.

We admired in France the skill of the King of Prussia in withdrawing his troops from Wesel to increase his own army, and in taking his artillery to Holland. It was said that in that way he secured the fidelity of the King of England, Elector of Hanover, by leaving that State open to an army of one hundred thousand Frenchmen and twenty thousand Germans in our pay; also that the garrison he had in Wesel would certainly have been made prisoners of war; and there were other reflections equally specious and frivolous. For my part, I have always considered the evacuation of Wesel as a great blunder on the part of the King of Prussia, who does not make many, but, on his own showing, does make some. The siege of Wesel left him at liberty to fight the army of the empress without the possibility of a diversion in her favour by us; in the second place, if the King of Prussia wanted his national troops in his own army, he could have put into Wesel six thousand Hessians and as many Hanoverians and Brunswick men, and still have left

thirty thousand with the Duke of Cumberland to harass us in our siege; in the third place, the King of Prussia could not have divined that the spring of 1757 would not be rainy and that the Rhine would not overflow; he ought to have calculated on all the accidents of season and rivers, and have counted on our army contracting diseases during the siege which would reduce it by a third during the campaign; in the fourth place, the occupation of Wesel by our troops could alone prevent Holland from taking sides with our enemies. Was it wise in the King of Prussia to put, by the evacuation of that place, that power into the position of forced neutrality? Moreover, why give us a depot and a base of supplies like Wesel? We have seen since how important that place has been for us and for the safety of our Rhenish allies. It may be said that Wesel could not be defended for more than six weeks, or two months at the most. I agree to that; but the whole campaign would have been taken up in reducing the fortress and in making preparations to enter the Electorate of Hanover, and the King of Prussia needed during that first campaign to make us lose a great deal of time.

Before the exile of M. d'Argenson, a memorial had been composed containing a full plan of the war; all blunders were noted; all failures of precaution, such as had often made French enterprises fail outside of our own frontier, were pointed out; in this memorial the best principles were laid down and the wisest precautions were scrupulously detailed. The king gave to this memorial his approbation and his authority. It may be said that during the first two campaigns pains were taken to reverse all the principles of conduct developed in that memorial. They avoided none of the blunders there foreseen; they employed none of the resources indicated to repair them. It really seemed in this continental war that we were corrupted by the money of the King of

Prussia to ruin our own affairs and promote his, and that the English ministers were governing our navy to destroy it.

Nevertheless, the whole nation, which had applauded the Treaty of Versailles, because it had foolishly thought that treaty would give us peace, now uttered loud cries against the war that we were carrying into Germany. The ministry were accused of madness, of crushing France for the sake of a Court which had been our enemy for three hundred years. No one considered what the state of Italy would be on the death of King Ferdinand of Spain (who did in fact die at the close of 1758); they had forgotten that the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle had left defenceless the Infant Don Philip, whose States of Parma would be divided between the Court of Vienna and the King of Sardinia; no one chose to remember that the King of Naples had refused to accede to the Treaty of Vienna, and that, without the alliance of France and the empress, he could not have disposed tranquilly and freely, as he did, of the kingdom of the Two Sicilies in favour of a younger son, against the customs and laws of that country. All these things were seen to take place without the public of France deigning to perceive that every one of these points had been agreed upon in advance by the Treaty of Versailles.

Men have concealed from themselves the danger that France would have run, lacking money, generals, and above all a Council, if the empress, following her former errors, had made herself the ally of England and of the Empress of Russia; we should have had the King of Prussia on our side just so long as it suited his interests; the Queen of Hungary would have ceded to him some district or some fortress, and he would have left us a prey to all Europe declared against us.

We should then have seen whether, as they never ceased

to say, and still continue to say to this day, it would have been more advantageous for us to lose battles in Flanders and Italy than in Hanover. I know that less money would have gone out of our treasury if the war could have been fought on our frontiers; but we should have lost provinces; beaten by the Hanoverians should we have been less beaten by the imperial troops? I know that an army has resources in its own land and among its own fortresses; but I also know that it is far better that the devastations of war should be beyond the frontiers rather than within them. With economy, with commerce and good administration one can always bring back in a short time money spent in foreign parts; but one cannot rebuild burned villages nor replant great forests in a day. It is madness to wish to have war in one's own country when we can, with wise precautions, carry it usefully into that of our enemies or neighbours. It was through lack of prudence, foresight, and economy that we were unable to subsist in foreign lands. If we had secured our rears in marching, provisioned the rivers behind us, fortified our posts, abandoned at the end of each campaign the territory we could not hold with military force during the winter, our misfortunes would not have happened, or at least they could have been prevented; it really seems as if we had courted them from sheer heedlessness.

IX.

1757. — The Comte de Stainville and the Embassy at Vienna. — My Appointment to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. — Intrigues to remove Maréchal d'Estrées from the command of the army. — Negotiations of the Duke of Cumberland with Maréchal de Richelieu; of the King of Prussia with the same, and the Margravine of Bayreuth with me.

M. ROUILLÉ, always vehemently opposed from jealousy to the king's new system, did everything possible to send as ambassador to Vienna the Comte de Broglie, who, although he had much intelligence, did not perceive that M. Rouillé had only the name and title of minister, and that the appointment to Vienna belonged rather to Mme. de Pompadour (with whom M. de Broglie was not on good terms) than to any one else; also I was likely to influence it, and I knew that he was not in favour of the alliance, and that to please the dauphine, he was flattering her with a chimerical project of making the kingdom of Poland hereditary in the House of Saxony. Mme. de Pompadour was thinking only of giving this important embassy to the Comte de Stainville.

I have mentioned heretofore the obligations that she thought she was under to him, and the violent passion which she believed he felt for her, — a powerful agent on the mind of a woman who pushed the admiration of her own face to the verge of absurdity. It was very important for Madame Infanta to have a friend in the ambassador whom the king would appoint to the Court of Vienna. The Comte de Stainville (since Duc de Choiseul), who has never wanted

for cleverness and ability, passed through Parma on returning from Rome, and did so well with Madame Infanta that she asked the king to give him the embassy to Vienna; she also asked it, with even more eagerness, of the marquise and of me. I should therefore have opposed the appointment in vain; Madame de Pompadour was bent upon it; Madame Infanta still more so; I should have displeased both by opposing it, and have done so without success. Moreover, it would have forced me to declare myself against M. de Stainville without apparent reasons; the jealousy he had slightly shown me when I was appointed to the embassy in Spain, and the little approbation he had secretly given to the Treaty of Versailles were certainly not sufficient reasons to exclude the friend of the marquise and the declared servitor of Madame Infanta. Besides, by putting aside the Comte de Stainville the appointment of M. de Broglie, who was urged by the dauphine and was openly opposed to the alliance with Vienna, would certainly take place; the Comte de Broglie in sustaining M. Rouillé in the ministry was coveting his office; the embassy to Vienna was the best ladder to it.

I took the course of letting the appointment be made as the marquise wished, and of being useful to the Comte de Stainville so long as he continued to serve the king well. His enemies hastened to let me know the danger I ran in associating with public affairs a man of his birth, enterprising, bold, ambitious, and adroit. Resolved as I was to quit the Court and offices when the king wished, and whenever I saw I could no longer play a useful and proper part, I was not alarmed by the danger they pointed out to me and on which I had already reflected. The Comte de Stainville arrived in Paris and soon carried the day over his rival the Comte de Broglie.

I knew, a few days after his arrival, that the Maréchal de Luxembourg, having related to him the confidence that the marquise had in me and the preference she gave me over not only the ministers but her own friends, the Comte de Stainville answered: "Oh! as for him, he does not trouble me; I can ruin him with her whenever I choose." All these germs of ill-will were wrapped in a conduct so frank with me, so decisive for the political system of the king, that I had no difficulty in forgiving the secret sentiments I had reason to suspect in him. I attributed them to the jealousy I excited almost universally; and as my ambition turned to the side of acquiring reputation rather than fortune or place, and as, moreover the Comte de Stainville was all the more suited to fill the embassy to Vienna because he had in his character a very necessary decision which would soon put an end to the formalities and delays of M. de Kaunitz, I paid less attention to my own interests than to those of the king.

M. de Stainville soon saw, by the confidence with which the king honoured me and by that which the marquise gave me, that the safest way for him, and also the most useful, was not to thwart my good fortune, but to give himself the merit in my mind of contributing to it. He understood my character; he knew with what good faith I would do justice to his talents and make known his services to the Council. He made his plan to advance his fortunes by raising mine and in working to secure it; if circumstances changed he thought himself in a position to destroy it by the same means with which he had raised it. It will be seen how faithful he was to this system, and how much good faith and honour I put into my conduct towards him.

When I entered the council I had made Mme. de Pompadour promise that never should there be any question

of giving me a department. I feared the dangers; I knew that I should be responsible to the public for events as soon as I had the acknowledged direction of affairs; that the king could not check the jealousies nor the intrigues of the other secretaries of State. I knew, moreover, that I risked quarrels with the marquise as soon as I was charged with the ministry of Foreign Affairs; that she would want to appoint all ambassadors; that she would write from her own cabinet directly to them; and that if my opinions on public affairs became different from hers I was not a man to sacrifice to her wishes either the good of the State or my own reputation. I could avoid these dangers only by keeping the place I now occupied in the Council without a department; all I needed was that they should put in M. Rouillé's place a minister more capable and less jealous. Besides which, my health since the month of March, 1757, was much shaken; I was not without uneasiness about poison, for I saw, both without and within, many powerful reasons for fearing it. It will be seen how it became impossible for me to escape the department of Foreign Affairs, and to whom I owed that fatal obligation.

I was charged with drawing up the instructions for M. de Stainville; I read them to the Council, and the dauphin, to whom the king, ever since his entrance to the Council, had ordered me to explain all that had passed between our Court and that of Vienna, seemed much struck with the clearness and propriety of those instructions.

I shall have occasion hereafter to relate by itself all that concerns the dauphin during the period of my ministry. I shall only remark here that I never went to the prince unless sent by the king, and that his Majesty always asked me how long a time my conversation with his son had lasted. The special kindness with which the royal

family honoured me contributed not a little to increase the jealousy of the courtiers, and to cause uneasiness to the marquise; I shall speak of this more fully in the sequel.

The Comte de Stainville had too much intelligence not to feel the impropriety of his being under the orders of a minister of ill-intentions towards the success of the affairs with which he was charged; he did not wish to run the risk of compromising himself under the instructions of M. Rouillé; on the one hand, he believed he did an agreeable thing to the marquise in forcing M. Rouillé to retire, a useful thing to the king's new system by putting me at the head of affairs, and a useful thing for himself, by having the air of doing me a service, — I say having the air, because if I had desired that place it would have offered itself to me.

The means which he took to carry out his object were singular, and picture very correctly the character of his mind. He requested Mme. de Pompadour to entreat the king to allow him to resign the embassy to Vienna, and grant him for all favour the right to be employed in the army in his rank, which was that of a brigadier. At first Mme. de Pompadour thought this a joke, and later, that M. de Stainville had gone mad; but when she found that he was serious she was amazed; he was actually renouncing fifty thousand crowns in salaries, a position of the highest honour, and closing the door to a brilliant and almost certain fortune.

He had no difficulty in making it felt that in renouncing these advantages he meant to show how dangerous it would be for him to serve the king at Vienna, in circumstances so critical and delicate, under an ill-intentioned and absolutely incapable minister; he made it understood that his reputation was dearer to him than all else, and he had no difficulty in convincing the marquise of the truth of what he said. "But," she objected, "M. Rouillé is dying; he sleeps at the

Council and in his own cabinet; we have only to wait for an apoplexy; that will deliver us; the king does not want to be the homicide of an incapable but honest man by displacing him. If he would only displace himself the king would rejoice; but Mme. Rouillé, who loves the Court, like a bourgeoise who was never made to be in it, will not allow him to do so—" "Would it please you," interrupted M. de Stainville, eagerly, "if I should bring you, within an hour, M. Rouillé's resignation? Will you have it?"

The marquise, while regarding the scheme as folly, consented, declaring that she would gladly induce the king to keep M. Rouillé in the Council, and in his office of superintendent of posts, by means of which Mme. Rouillé could still keep her little place at Court.

One sees by this on what ridiculous considerations the fate of great affairs does sometimes depend. For two years it had been necessary to displace M. Rouillé, and yet, from fear of vexing his wife, they preferred to compromise the interests of the greatest powers in Europe!

The Comte de Stainville kept his word. He went to see Mme. Rouillé, and made her feel that her present Court existence depended on the preservation of her husband's health, and that that precious health depended on his release from the burden of his ministry. She resisted for some time; but finally she went down to see her husband with M. de Stainville, and decided him to send in his resignation; which news the comte brought back in triumph to the marquise, who received it with as much surprise as joy. It must be owned that nothing could be more unscrupulous than this action of the Comte de Stainville, nor more adroit.

I was summoned to Versailles (the derangement of my health having detained me for several days in Paris), and

the king forced me by his kindness to violate the oath I had made to myself, never to take upon my shoulders the burden of a department. If this was a great mistake on my part, I can at least say it was not voluntary. Could I resist the king's wish that I should accept a post, the principal functions of which I had fulfilled for two years? My health would have been a sufficient reason for refusing it, if I were not as much over-burdened with work in not accepting it. The idea of the greater good to be done determined me; and I may say with truth that it was not the first time in my life that idea has won the day over my repugnances.

The very day that I took my oath of office before the king, June 29, 1757, I carried to him the news of the complete victory won by Maréchal Daun over the King of Prussia at Kolin, and the deliverance of Prague. After that period until the battle of Rosbach, November 5, 1757, I never entered the king's apartments without taking to him good news; so that when people saw me coming they used to cry out: "*Tiens!* here he comes; he looks like a battle won."

Maréchal d'Estrées, in command of our armies, had committed the great mistake of not being willing to take concerted action with Pâris-Duverney, who was the head of the commissary department, and had always been the right hand of generals and ministers of war, — a man who, with some defects, united a great soul to many ideas and much experience. The maréchal committed another as great in showing jealousy of the Prince de Soubise, who commanded the reserve, which was habitually called the "Soubise army." The Prince de Soubise was beloved by the king and the marquise. The plan of the latter, who believed that all her friends had great talents, was that he should carry off some signal advantage which would put her in a position to ask

for him with decency the command of our armies, and a place in the Council as military member of it. The marquise thought that she herself would find support in a man of the honour and worth of M. de Soubise, a minister as well as a general, able and docile, who would follow her views and carry out her ideas.

Maréchal d'Estrées felt the rôle they wanted this great seigneur to play, and, as he was neither enduring nor dissimulating, M. de Soubise often had to suffer from his temper. The latter made frequent complaints to the marquise, who did not conceal her displeasure at the conduct of the maréchal towards her favourite. This rendered it easy to make her listen to and welcome the complaints of the Court of Vienna on the slowness with which Maréchal d'Estrées was proceeding on the Lower Rhine. It is certain that he lacked many things before starting; but it was not understood why, with so large a force under his command, he did not advance with more vigour on the Duke of Cumberland, who commanded an army much inferior to his own.

Maréchal de Richelieu, who had uttered loud cries when the Comte d'Estrées was appointed to the command of the armies, conceived, although he had quarrelled with the marquise, the bold idea of supplanting him. The Comte de Maillebois, quartermaster-general of the army in Germany, entered into his views, as did M. de Crémilles, lieutenant-general, a weak, ambitious, and timid man, who wanted the first places, but feared his own power to maintain them. The maréchal had always had the confidence of M. d'Argenson, and now had that of M. de Paulmy (his uncle's successor), and still more that of Pâris-Duverney, who, since the deaths of Maréchal de Saxe and Maréchal de Löwendahl, and the capture of Minorca, had taken it into his head that

the Maréchal de Richelieu was as great a warrior as he was a courtier and man of intrigue. M. Duverney, sensitive to the affronts put upon him by Maréchal d'Estrées, profited by the complaints of the Court of Vienna, and the vexation of the marquise at the proceedings of the general towards M. de Soubise. He wrote a memorial, which was strongly approved by MM. de Richelieu, de Maillebois, de Crémilles, and de Paulmy. Forty thousand more men were sent to Germany under Maréchal de Richelieu, who went there with orders to command the army, and to command Maréchal d'Estrées, if he were willing to put himself under his orders. By this new plan, the Prince de Soubise was given a corps of twenty-five or thirty thousand men, who were to act immediately in Saxony, keep the King of Prussia delayed there without risking a battle, and so give time to the Austrians to seize Silesia, where, in spite of our desires, they wished to establish the theatre of war, instead of placing it on the Elbe, where the mass of our forces could have supported them and rendered possible the siege of Magdeburg, while the Swedes and Russians would lay siege to Stettin-on-the Oder.

I shall say here, in passing, that the Russians could never be induced to quit the frontiers of Poland, nor the Austrians the frontiers of Silesia. The taking of Magdeburg and Stettin would have taken from the King of Prussia the Elbe and the Oder, the resources of his hereditary States. Silesia would have fallen of herself on the day this double object was obtained; but Providence did not permit the carrying out of these sound views. It must also be admitted that our own blunders aided the obstinacy of our allies in making us all miss the principal aim and purpose of the war.

To return to the new plan of campaign devised by M. Duverney. It must be allowed that if the Prince de Soubise

had been the Maréchal de Saxe, and if, instead of giving him an army composed of troops from the Cercles, they had given him forty thousand men drawn from the grand-army (which would still have been strong enough with sixty thousand to defeat the Duc of Cumberland and take possession of the Electorate of Hanover),—we must, I say, allow that if the troops of the Empire had been kept to guard our communications, and if our army in Westphalia had been well in concert with the army sent to Saxony, the plan would have been as fruitful in results as it was judicious. It would not have resulted, as Pâris-Duverney said prophetically, in bringing the war to an end in one campaign, but it gave reason to expect (especially after the taking of Chemnitz and the victory at Breslau by the Austrians, November, 1757) that the King of Prussia would have lacked resources to continue the war, and that Magdeburg and Stettin would have fallen into our hands and those of our allies in the second campaign, which would have ended the war gloriously and infallibly.

But it was madness to strip the kingdom of our troops, to expose our coasts to invasion from England and the country to uprisings of the religionaries; it was even greater folly to send the Prince de Soubise, known only as an honest man full of generosity and nobleness, to measure himself, in his apprenticeship, against the King of Prussia, and to imagine that Maréchal de Richelieu would be willing to aid in making the military reputation of M. de Soubise, with the certainty that if it were made by the winning of a battle the prince would supersede him in the command of the armies —which was certain through the king's liking for the prince and the passion of Mme. de Pompadour to see her "dear Soubise" at the head of the army and the Council.

Pâris-Duverney was blinded by the hatred he had to Maréchal d'Estrées, by the unreflecting enthusiasm which the

taking of Minorca had inspired in him for Maréchal de Richelieu, whose bravery and audacity made Duverney conceive the highest hopes. He knew that the king would never willingly displace Maréchal d'Estrées, whom he liked, to substitute Maréchal de Richelieu, whom he no longer liked but feared for his intrigues and his ambition. In consequence of this, Duverney bethought him of proposing the Prince de Soubise for the command of the army in Saxony, feeling well assured that the marquise would sacrifice her hatred to M. de Richelieu if, by giving him command of the grand-army, that of Saxony could be secured for M. de Soubise, and that with this last expectation she would bring the king to agree to the displacement of Maréchal d'Estrées. All Duverney's conjectures in regard to this proved sound.

The Comte de Maillebois saw in the distance, as if assured of it, the future disagreement of MM. de Richelieu and de Soubise, and, Maréchal d'Estrées once dismissed, he reckoned on M. de Soubise being ruined by his inexperience, M. de Richelieu by his eagerness for getting money and conducting the army as he pleased, but especially on the hatred Mme. de Pompadour had vowed to the maréchal since his late intrigues at the time of the king's attempted assassination. All these rivals set aside, the Comte de Maillebois, brother-in-law of M. de Paulmy, minister of war, and quartermaster-general of the grand-army, flattered himself, not without reason, that in spite of Mme. de Pompadour's repugnance to him, they would be forced to give him the command of the armies; he did not foresee then that the Duc de Broglie, by distinguished actions, would snatch it from him, nor that he himself would alienate his chance by the imprudence of his conduct.

The above is the *mot d'énigme* of the campaign of 1757, and almost that of the whole war, for the same intrigues and

the same personal aims thwarted all the operations of our armies.

Pâris-Duverney, having drawn up his plan of campaign, agreed with the parties interested that I should ask the king for an audience, at which Duverney should read his memorial in presence of his Majesty, Mme. de Pompadour, and M. de Paulmy only; it was agreed that I should not know its contents for three weeks. They feared that the Maréchal de Belleisle, a friend of the Maréchal d'Estrées and an old enemy of M. de Richelieu, might fetter the project; for this reason it was settled that I should not be informed of it until the plan had been adopted by the king, and Maréchal de Richelieu had, through a reconciliation with Mme. de Pompadour, induced her to obtain for him the command of the grand-army and for M. de Soubise that of the little army in Saxony.

It is incredible that such an intrigue should have succeeded as it did, and that the king should have allowed them to make a mystery to me of an operation which was to put another face on the affairs of Europe with which I was charged; I could not myself believe it if I had not been an ocular witness of the manœuvre. The king, to whom I announced Duverney's memorial, telling him that I was not to know of its contents for three weeks, joked me about it. I made him remark that when his Majesty knew the contents himself he would inform me of them if, in his opinion, it was necessary for his affairs that I should know them earlier.

M. de Paulmy was won to the scheme by his brother-in-law, M. de Maillebois. It was, therefore, not difficult for Pâris-Duverney, who has both ardour and eloquence, to make Mme. de Pompadour admire a plan which gave a fine rôle to the Prince de Soubise, and got rid of the Maréchal d'Estrées,

whom she now could not endure, although it placed at the head of the armies M. de Richelieu, whom she disliked. But she was so confident that M. de Soubise would beat the King of Prussia, and that this success would make him a marshal of France, that she consented to the choice of M. de Richelieu in the hope that M. de Soubise would take his place in the next campaign; friendship carried the day over hatred in her heart. Thus was decided the greatest and then most important affair for France and for Europe.

Maréchal de Richelieu pretended at first great reluctance to make advances to Mme. de Pompadour, but finally consented. All went well at the interview. The maréchal justified himself, and the marquise simulated sentiments that were not in her heart. It was agreed that excellent troops should be given to M. de Soubise; but after the maréchal was appointed commander-in-chief of the whole army I had great difficulty in making him cede to M. de Soubise a single old and tried regiment; so that before he started for the army he had already partly quarrelled with the marquise and shown coldness to M. de Soubise, so little master was he of concealing his jealousy of that favourite of the king.

After the interview of Maréchal de Richelieu with Mme. de Pompadour, M. Duverney communicated to me his memorial in presence of the Marquis de Paulmy, the maréchal de Belleisle, and M. de Crémilles. It was earlier than at first proposed. I was not dazzled by what was specious in the plan. I said that the kingdom would be left a prey to invasion by England; that the expenditures would be increased; and that the success of the plan depended on the events of the war, the conduct of the generals, and partly on that of our allies. They were not at all pleased with me, but the resolutions were already taken and they could do without my approval. I admit, however, that I had a good opinion

of the courage of the two generals, and that I thought Maréchal de Richelieu more eager for glory than for money; my only fear was for M. de Soubise, thus imprudently confronted with the King of Prussia.

Meantime Maréchal de Belleisle, who had his spies everywhere, knew that something was going on to the disadvantage of Maréchal d'Estrées, and that Maréchal de Richelieu was likely to supplant him. He therefore wrote to d'Estrées in these very words: "My dear maréchal, if you wish to continue to command the king's army, make haste to cross the Weser, give battle, and win it." That note drew Maréchal d'Estrées from his lethargy and decided him to fight the battle of Hastembeck, which proved a victory, though he believed for some time that he had lost it, as he modestly stated in a letter he wrote to the king after the affair. This action, which was no great thing in itself, had great results, and saved to France the whole country of Hanover.

Maréchal de Richelieu, in consequence of delaying his departure, did not arrive until after the battle and after the city of Hanover had sent its keys to Maréchal d'Estrées. All Europe was amazed that after so considerable a victory the command of the army was taken from the general who had won it; but Europe was ignorant of the intrigues of Versailles; it did not know that six weeks before the battle Maréchal de Richelieu had already been substituted for Maréchal d'Estrées.

It can be said that we have, by our conduct in the last war, baffled all the reasonings and all the judgments of men of sense; this is what intrigue leads to; this is the effect of the passions of men and the infatuation of women.

The Maréchal de Richelieu had hardly taken command of the grand-army before the Duke of Cumberland wrote to him that he had powers from the king, his father, to

negotiate with him for the peace of Hanover and the neutrality of that State, or for a suspension of arms. The maréchal replied, with much respect and dignity, that "the king had placed him at the head of his army to fight the enemies of his allies, and not to negotiate."

This answer conformed to the instructions of the king, which I had given him. In them he was formally ordered to send to Versailles all negotiations whatsoever which the enemy might endeavour to open with him, whether on the part of the King of England or on that of the King of Prussia and his allies. The Maréchal de Richelieu remembered this formal command on this occasion; he forgot it at Kloster-Zeven a month or six weeks later. He might at least have remembered then what the Duke of Cumberland had written him on his arrival respecting his powers when that prince declared to him at Kloster-Zeven that he had no powers, but would despatch a courier to London to obtain them. Of two things, one: either the Duke of Cumberland did not tell the truth when he first wrote to the maréchal, or he deceived him at Kloster-Zeven in declaring that he had no powers.

A short time after the letter of the Duke of Cumberland, the King of Prussia wrote one to the maréchal with his own hand, very flattering, and proposing with jests what he called "a trifle," — those were the very words of his Prussian Majesty, — "a bagatelle," a mere nothing: "that of treating for peace with the conqueror of Port-Mahon, the conqueror of Lower Saxony, the liberator of Genoa;" adding that if this proposal did not displease him, he would send one of his confidential advisers to treat with him. The maréchal sent us a copy of his answer, together with the original letter of the King of Prussia. He answered the king, very suitably, that he could only make wishes for peace, and could not

enter into any negotiation for it without the orders of the king his master.

The letter of the King of Prussia was communicated to the Court of Vienna, which laughed, with good reason, at the trap laid for us to suspend the operations of the campaign in order to give his Prussian Majesty time to recover from his losses at Kolin, and from various other checks he had received from time to time.

Maréchal de Richelieu has since declared that it depended on France only to make peace on that occasion; that is to say, during the first campaign, and at a time when the Court of Vienna had just recovered the upper hand, when Russia had put sixty thousand men in motion, and when all our allies were making efforts to fulfil the obligations of their alliance with the Courts of Vienna and Saxony! The beautiful dames of Paris, over whom the maréchal, old as he is, preserves his rights, may believe this, but it is amazing that historians and men of intelligence have given it a thought.

Word was sent to Maréchal de Richelieu to reply to the King of Prussia that the king would always incline his allies to make peace when the Empire, Saxony, and the Court of Vienna were satisfied respecting the invasions and damages they had suffered.

In spite of this refusal, and some time after the capitulation of Kloster-Zeven, when the maréchal thought proper to take the totality of his army to Halberstadt in Lower Saxony, there to levy contributions and eat up supplies which were intended to provision our armies for the winter, the King of Prussia, knowing that Maréchal de Richelieu would be very glad to end the war, and perhaps to weaken our union with the Court of Vienna, because that union strengthened the position of Mme. de Pompadour, his enemy,

proposed a suspension of arms during the winter, between the French and Prussian troops. The Duke of Brunswick asked the maréchal to treat of this affair; the latter refused to do so, but permitted the Marquis du Mesnil, lieutenant-general, to hear what the duke had to say. In fact, among them they drew up the articles of this extraordinary agreement; the maréchal had it approved at a council of war, and all our generals, who were dying of a desire to get back to Paris for the winter, testified that this suspension would be very useful in a military point of view, that they saw nothing in it that was not to our advantage, but that it was for politics to decide whether such an agreement could be carried out under the circumstances.

We made no mystery to the Court of Vienna of this last attempt of the King of Prussia. That Court had not been pleased, neither had the Swedish Senate, with the convention of Kloster-Zeven, the coming rupture of which it foresaw; it was now indignant that Maréchal de Richelieu should again give ear to such artifices of the common enemy. These were indeed gross; for this new convention secured the possession of Saxony until the spring to the King of Prussia; he would then have led all his forces into Silesia to drive out the Austrians; and we should not have been more tranquil during the winter, inasmuch as the Hanoverian army was resolved to break the treaty of Kloster-Zeven — for I can no longer call it a capitulation. By accepting the proposal of the King of Prussia, we should do the greatest possible harm to the empress-queen, in giving that monarch the ability to assemble all his forces during six months against her; we ourselves would have remained embarrassed before the Hanoverian army, unable to draw any profit from the diversion the army of M. de Soubise, combining with that of the Empire, was to make in Saxony.

The King of Prussia, as it was, drew great advantages from these parleys between the Duke of Brunswick and the Marquis du Mesnil; he caused to be printed the form of the agreement drawn up between the two generals, adding articles which gave great umbrage to several of our allies, and making it believed for a long time that we had signed them.

While the King of Prussia was thus setting traps for the Maréchal de Richelieu, the Margravine of Bayreuth, his much loved sister, was negotiating with me, through the channel of Cardinal de Tencin, then living in retirement at Lyon, and not unwilling to play once more a little rôle in the world before his death. My answer to the margravine was so concise and clear that the Court of Vienna spread copies of it throughout the Empire. That answer calmed the anxiety of our allies, all the more alarmed by these Prussian tentatives because France, which a year ago was enthusiastic over the Treaty of Versailles, had now become Prussian; our armies were Prussian, several of our ministers would have been had they dared to raise the mask, and our alliance with the Courts of Vienna and Russia was more criticised in Paris than in London.

My letter through Cardinal de Tencin dispersed the umbrages of our allies. The margravine, however, was not repelled; she sent the Comte de Mirabeau [uncle of the famous Mirabeau], my relative and her chamberlain, to me with a letter, which I refused to unseal unless he consented that after having read it I should place it, the original letter, in the hands of the Comte de Staremberg, the ambassador of the empress. M. de Mirabeau took the letter from me as soon as he knew the use I should make of it.

Nothing is more dangerous in wars of alliance, especially when they first begin, than to give ear to such overtures;

they usually tend only to causing loss of time, to suspending military operations, to sowing jealousy and distrust among allies. Maréchal de Richelieu had too much intelligence not to know how common and how easy are all such traps; he therefore had his reasons for giving in to them; it was not because he was an enemy to the Court of Vienna, nor that he was very enthusiastic over the talents of the King of Prussia (as the whole French nation now were); but the more our alliance with the empress was successful, the more the influence of the marquise was strengthened; he was her enemy, and she was his enemy. Neither did it suit him that the Prince de Soubise should play a great part. Such are the secret motives which explain the conduct of the maréchal at Kloster-Zeven and during the remainder of the campaign.

To return to the period after the departure of Maréchal, d'Estrées, who left M. de Richelieu the command of an army which had just won a battle by which it brought into subjection the Electorate of Hanover. Maréchal de Richelieu, instead of marching directly on the Duke of Cumberland amused himself by receiving in Hanover the honours of a triumph that was due to his predecessor; he gave a detachment to the Duc d'Ayen, with orders to levy contributions in the Duchy of Brunswick, and he thus left time for the Hanoverian army to reach the camp at Stade. This camp was well fortified, but it was necessary to either perish or vanquish if forced into it. The Elbe, very broad at that point, was at the rear of the Hanoverian army, and there were no boats to transport it across the river into the duchy of Saxe-Lauenburg. It was there that Maréchal de Richelieu, after having lost his opportunity to vanquish the Hanoverian army, resolved to force it with an audacity which came of imprudence and temerity. He engaged the head of

his own army in a swampy region where it was impossible, if it had rained for twenty-four hours only, that provisions or artillery could reach him. If the Duke of Cumberland had trusted more than he did to the valour of his troops, then ill-disciplined and frightened, though two months later under an able general they forced us to evacuate the whole region between the principality of Halberstadt and the Lower Rhine, it was very possible, I say, that the head of Maréchal de Richelieu's army might have been beaten by the Hanoverian army issuing from the intrenchments of Stade; not succeeding, that army could have regained its fortified camp; having succeeded, it would have disconcerted all our projects.

We shall presently see how and where this audacious march of Maréchal de Richelieu ended.

APPENDIX I.

THE EXPEDITION TO MINORCA.

Letter written by Maréchal de Richelieu to the Abbé Comte de Bernis.

HEADQUARTERS, PORT-MAHON.
May 5, 1756.

I DO not know, monsieur, if you have yet arrived at your embassy in Madrid, and I fear the illness which kept you in bed when I left; though my last news, dated April 20, assured me that you were beginning to go out. I hope that you will give me news of yourself as soon as you reach Madrid; and that if you are not yet there the Abbé de Frischmann, who will open this letter in your absence, will send them to me.

Meantime I must render you an account of all that has happened to me since my departure from Toulon. I was welcomed by a storm, April 13th, which scattered many of the vessels which I had with me, — 198 sail, independently of ships of war. Several were dismasted, others sprang a-leak and were forced to return to Toulon, Marseille, and some to Corsica. They have all rejoined, however, and I am only short of three feluccas laden with subsistence-supplies, one of which was captured, as you will see by the copy of my letter to the Marquis de Cayro, herewith annexed.

I landed on the 18th at Ciutadella, a rather well fortified town at the other extremity of the island from Port-Mahon, rather remarkable for the number of its public buildings and edifices. The English abandoned it on the approach of our fleet and while we were disembarking. They did the same at Fournel, where there is a rather considerable harbour, defended by a very well fortified fort, of which I took possession next morning. Having learned

that the enemy on retreating was beginning to do damage, I immediately marched twenty-four companies of grenadiers, supported by a brigade of infantry, commanded by the Marquis du Mesnil, lieutenant-general, who drove back the enemy and camped at Mercadal, which is about the centre of the island. I joined him the day after with the rest of the army and sent on the Prince de Beauvau with all the grenadiers to seize this place (Port-Mahon) and take up a position around the fortress of Saint-Philip, where I camped myself with the whole army on the following day.

I have been busy since then in landing the immense quantity of supplies necessary for the commissariat and the artillery in taking so considerable a fortress; and as on this island they never saw a cart, and the mules are very small and too puny to drag artillery, I have had to use the oxen I brought with me, and soldiers, to drag my numerous and weighty baggage; consequently it is easy to see the time it has taken me to collect my gabions, fascines, and all that is needed before beginning so important a siege; but, finally, with infinite pains and trouble, all is now ready, and I expect to-morrow, or, at latest, the day after, to open the trenches.

Our squadron blockades the port, in which I have found two millions worth of French property and vessels, which are now in my power. If you have any knowledge of the plan of the harbour you will see that it rises toward the town, so that these vessels were able to escape at night below the cannon of the fort and come to the foot of my terrace, where I hold them in safety. I have seized Fort Phillippet and the whole right bank of the harbour as you enter it, on which is the signal tower, where I have posted a battery of mortars and cannon, which defend the entry of the port to all attempting it, except our own squadron, which lies at half-range from the shore, to batter all the works on that side which overlook it.

On arriving at Ciutadella I sent a vessel to Majorca with an aide of the quartermaster-general of my army to inquire of the French consul what means he would have to obtain on that island supplies for the convenience and comfort of our army, which may be wanting on this island. I learned two days later, by a vessel

sent me from Majorca, that the Marquis de Cayro, captain-general of that island, had sent for our consul as soon as he heard of our approach, to pay him compliments and assure him that he had received orders from the Spanish prime-minister to preserve a perfect equality between the English and ourselves, which it seems they mean to pay us in compliments. You will see by the copy of a letter I have just written to M. de Cayro the subjects on which I think I have reason to complain, and the representations which, it seems to me, you ought to make about them to the Court of Spain.

It is for you, monsieur, who are on the spot, to choose the means to convey these complaints, and the manner of remedying the inconveniences to which the army of the king may be put in consequence of such conduct. It is very fatal that we should meet with them from Spain in this conjuncture, from which she might derive an advantage for herself which she may not find again in a hundred years, for you know it only depends on her to recover now an important portion of her own domain, which would make her the arbiter of the commerce of the Mediterranean, instead of those who have been her veritable enemies ever since they have had possession of it. I say "her veritable enemies" because assuredly the English are more the enemies of Spain than of us; for they have much more to gain, and the parts of her commerce which they are trying to tear from her in order to attain to universal despoticity of commerce is greater in proportion to what they get from us. . . . The two kings of France and Spain ought to be united for the interests of the two nations, being kings of the same blood; and therefore, as you may say, one; though by the divisions and intrigues of their Courts they are perpetually being drawn away from the interests of their nations, their houses, and their glory, to give profit to their common enemies.

It is a fatality which true patriots must ever deplore; and if your talents and your intellect do not succeed in putting things where they should be, at a moment which seems to have an eminent interest, so clear and so easy to satisfy, I see with grief that we may as well renounce it forever. You will give me great pleasure if you will write me the situation in which you

find minds, and also give me news of yourself, which you can always do by way of Barcelona.

We have heard nothing yet of Admiral Binck [Byng] and his squadron, with which he was said to be coming. It appears that ours, which is good and fine and in excellent condition, is determined to fight him unless he arrives with very superior forces. I scarcely dare flatter myself to reach the end of my siege before that event. However, if this should happen I should return to France immediately; leaving here enough troops and munitions to prevent the English from attempting, or at any rate succeeding in, the slightest enterprise against this island; which will be very easy to do for I myself only succeeded through their fault and the bad measures they had taken. . . .

(*Added in the Duke de Richelieu's own writing.*)

The ideas people had of this fortress were so different from what it really is that we should have been crazy to undertake the siege of it with what had been collected for that purpose before my departure. . . . When I ordered the artillery disembarked I asked how many days it would take to bring it before the fortress. The commandant, a man full of zeal and readiness to serve us, said six months; to comprehend the fright this gave me, I must explain that from Ciutadella to Port-Mahon is only the distance from Paris to Fontainebleau, and the road infinitely better in all respects. I had to find means to bring in detail the munitions of war, . . . and it was the soldiers who dragged the cannon and the caissons.

APPENDIX II.

TREATY AND CONVENTIONS OF MAY 1, 1756.

Convention of neutrality signed between Her Majesty the Empress-Queen of Hungary and Bohemia and His Very Christian Majesty.

THE differences which have arisen between His Very Christian Majesty and His Britannic Majesty on the subject of the boundaries of their respective possessions in America appearing, more and more, to threaten the public tranquillity, Her Majesty the Empress-Queen of Hungary and Bohemia and His Very Christian Majesty, who desire, equally, the unalterable duration of the friendship and good understanding which happily exists between them, have judged it proper to take measures for that effect.

Her Majesty the Empress-Queen declares and promises for this object, in the most solemn and most obligatory manner possible, that not only she will take no part, directly or indirectly, in the above-named differences, which do not concern her and about which she has made no pledges, but she will observe a perfect and exact neutrality during the whole time that the war between France and England, occasioned by the said differences, may last.

His Very Christian Majesty, on his side, not wishing to involve any other power in his private quarrel with England, declares and reciprocally promises, in the most solemn and most obligatory manner possible, that he will not attack, nor invade, under any pretext or for any reason whatsoever, the Low Countries, or other Kingdoms, States and Provinces under the dominion of Her Majesty the Empress-Queen; and that he will do her no harm either directly or indirectly, in her possessions nor in her rights; and Her Majesty the Empress-Queen promises reciprocally in regard to the Kingdoms, States, and Provinces of His Very Christian Majesty.

This convention or act of neutrality shall be ratified by Her Majesty the Empress-Queen and His Very Christian Majesty within the space of six weeks, or sooner, if possible.

In pledge whereof, we, the undersigned, ministers plenipotentiary of Her Majesty the Empress-Queen of Hungary and Bohemia and of His Very Christian Majesty have signed the present act and have appended thereto the seal of our arms.

Done at Versailles this first of May, 1756.

G. Comte de Staremberg.
A. L. Rouillé.
F. J. de Pierre de Bernis.

Treaty of defensive union and friendship signed between Her Majesty the Empress-Queen of Hungary and Bohemia and His Very Christian Majesty.

In the name of the very holy and indivisible Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. So be it.

Be it known to all those whom it may concern . . .

Her Majesty the Empress-Queen of Hungary and Bohemia has appointed and authorized the very illustrious and very excellent seigneur, George, Count of the Holy Roman Empire Staremberg, councillor of the supreme aulic council of the Empire, chamberlain of Their Imperial Majesties, and their plenipotentiary to His Very Christian Majesty; and His Very Christian Majesty in like manner appoints and authorizes the very illustrious and very excellent seigneurs, Antoine-Louis Rouillé, Comte de Jouy and de Fontaine-Guérin, councillor in all the councils of his Majesty, minister and secretary of State of his commandments and finances, commander and grand-treasurer of his Orders; and François-Joachim de Pierre de Bernis, Comte de Lyon, Abbé-commandataire of the royal abbey of Saint-Arnould of Metz, one of the forty of the Académie Française, and ambassador extraordinary from His Majesty to His Catholic Majesty; the which, after duly communicating to one another their full powers in good form, of which copies are appended to this treaty, and after duly conferring together, have agreed upon the following articles: —

Article I. There shall be friendship and sincere and constant

union between Her Majesty the Empress-Queen and His Very Christian Majesty. . . .

Art. II. The Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, and all the treaties of peace and friendship which since that epoch have been concluded and now exist between Their said Majesties, and in particular the convention and act of neutrality signed this day, are renewed and confirmed by the present treaty in the best form and as though they were inserted here word for word.

Art. III. Her Majesty the Empress-Queen promises and pledges herself to guarantee and defend all the kingdoms, states, provinces, and domains at present possessed by His Very Christian Majesty in Europe, whether by Herself or by her heirs and successors, without exception, against the attacks of any power whatsoever, and for always; the case, nevertheless, of the present war between France and England solely excepted, conformably with the act of neutrality signed this day.

Art. IV. His Very Christian Majesty pledges himself to Her Majesty, the Empress-Queen, her heirs and successors, according to the order of the pragmatic sanction established in Her house, to guarantee and defend against the attacks of any power whatsoever, and for always, all the kingdoms, states, provinces, and domains at present possessed by Her Majesty in Europe, without any exception.

Art. V. In consequence of this reciprocal guarantee, the high contracting powers will always work in concert for whatever measures may seem to them most proper for the maintenance of peace; and, in the event of the States of either one of them being threatened with invasion, they will employ their good and most efficacious offices to prevent it.

Art. VI. But as these good offices which they here promise to each other may not have the desired effect, Their said Majesties oblige themselves from the present moment to succour each other mutually with a body of twenty-four thousand men, in case one or the other of them be attacked, by whomsoever it be, and under whatsoever pretext it may be; the present war between France and England on the subject of America solely excepted, as was said in Article III of the present treaty.

Art. VII. The said succour shall be composed of eighteen

thousand infantry, and six thousand cavalry, and it shall be set in motion six weeks, or two months at latest after requisition is made by whichever one of the high contracting parties is attacked, or threatened with invasion in his or her possessions. This body of troops shall be maintained at the cost of whichever of the two high contracting parties is the one who is bound to supply this succour, and the one who receives it will furnish winter quarters to the said body of troops; but the party demanding this succour shall be free to require, in place of the said effective in men, the equivalent in money, to be paid in specie every month; but the said equivalent shall be estimated as a total, and neither party shall be able under any pretext whatsoever to exact more than eight thousand florins (money of the Empire), for each thousand men of the infantry, and twenty-four thousand florins for each thousand men of the cavalry.

Art. VIII. Her Majesty the Empress-Queen, and His Very Christian Majesty, reserve to themselves the right to mutually invite other powers to take part in this purely defensive treaty.

Art. IX. The present treaty shall be ratified by Her Majesty the Empress-Queen of Hungary and Bohemia, and by His Very Christian Majesty, and the ratifications shall be exchanged within the space of six weeks, counting from day of signature, or earlier if possible.

In pledge whereof we, the undersigned, ministers plenipotentiary of Her Majesty the Empress-Queen of Hungary and Bohemia and of His Very Christian Majesty, have signed the present treaty, and have appended thereto the seal of our arms.

Done at Versailles this first of May, 1756.

G. Comte de Starremberg.
A. L. Rouille.
F. J. de Pierre de Bernis.

APPENDIX III.

SPEECH PRONOUNCED FOR THE KING BY THE CHANCELLOR TO THE DEPUTIES FROM PARLIAMENT. SEPTEMBER 1, 1757.

THE sentiments which animated your predecessors would not have allowed them to take the step which the greater part of the officers of Parliament have lately been induced to take.

The king orders you to keep always present to your minds the obligations which your oath imposes on you. No motive can absolve you from rendering the justice that you owe to the subjects of His Majesty; magistrates appointed to administer the laws cannot refuse to do so without becoming guilty themselves of the evils which are the necessary result of that refusal.

On the repeated testimony which has been given to His Majesty of your submission, and your fidelity, He willingly desires today to question your hearts only, and find in your sentiments grounds for confidence in the future.

He therefore effaces forever the memory of what has displeased him in your past conduct, and will regard as non-existing the resignations which you have sent him.

His Majesty has informed you, by letters which have been addressed to you, that He is willing to replace in their offices all those who resigned them.

In regard to those of your colleagues whom He felt himself obliged, for special reasons, to send away, His Majesty, while retaining them in their places, has not fixed the time of their recall; when the king is obeyed, when you have resumed the full exercise of your usual functions, when His Majesty is satisfied with the excellence of your conduct, He will listen favourably to your appeals in this matter.

As for what concerns the second declaration (that on discipline), the king desires that the usage may become as useless as he has

judged it to be necessary; but His Majesty will not refuse to listen to whatever his parliament may think its duty to present to him.

He wills that the suppression ordered by his edict of December last be executed. He will send to his parliament an interpretative declaration, to the registration of which He orders you to proceed without delay.

The king orders you to resume your ordinary functions: conform yourselves to his intentions.

His Majesty has nothing so much at heart as that the silence he has prescribed for both sides shall reign throughout his kingdom, that the peace he has desired so long may be re-established. Though His Majesty, from superior reasons, and in view of the general welfare, thought it his duty to rise above ordinary rules, his parliament need not apprehend any consequences from this in the future. The king orders you therefore to see that his first declaration is executed, comformably to the canons of the Church received throughout the kingdom, to the laws, and to the ordinances.

It is by returning to these views that you will remember the considerations of wisdom and moderation on which you ought to regulate your conduct; give, yourselves, the example of respect and submission which His Majesty desires shall be paid to religion, and its ministers; it is thus that you will make a legitimate use of the authority which the king confides to you.

May these sentiments be always graven on your hearts; and remember that your sovereign is treating you, at this moment, as a father.

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